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NORÐURFARI:

OR,

RAMBLES IN ICELAND.

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OR,

RAMBLES IN ICELAND.

BY PLINY MILES.

Nefudan Norðurfara
Nu á hann að svara
  Fyrir fyrða tvo;
Virðið vel það gaman!
Við því sattir framan
Erum allir saman—
  Eða mun ei svo?
Jú—allir Isalandi
Unum við og sandi
  Er bláar bárur þvo.

BRINJULFSSON.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.
1854.

TO

PHILIP JAMES BAILEY,

AUTHOR OF "FESTUS,"

IN ADMIRATION OF HIS GENIUS, RESPECT FOR HIS CHARACTER,

AND REMEMBRANCE OF HIS FRIENDSHIP,

AND THE MANY

VALUABLE HOURS SPENT IN HIS SOCIETY,

This Unpretending Volume

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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PREFACE.

A PREFACE to a book is a sort of pedestal where the author gets up to make a speech; frequently an apologizing ground, where he "drops in—hopes he don't intrude;" a little strip of green carpet near the foot-lights, where he bows to the audience, and with a trembling voice asks them to look with lenient eyes on his darling bantling that is just coming before the world. Very likely he tells of the numerous difficulties and disadvantages under which he has laboured; perhaps apologizes for his style under the plea of writing against time, and that he has been greatly hurried. Readers and critics are usually indulgent towards the minor faults of an author, provided he entertains or instructs them; but they pay little attention to special pleadings. The writer who deliberately perpetrates a stupid or silly book, deserves the fate of dunces—obloquy and contempt. If he adds to this the double crime of setting up a justification, and asking that his work be not subject to the usual "canons" of criticism, then the reviewers should level their heaviest guns, pepper him pungently, and prove him but a buzzard, while he claimed the honours of a gamecock. We, however, have a right to expect and demand more from a veteran author than from a young and inexperienced one.

The world is so perverse, so incorrigible an unbeliever, that very likely it would not credit a word of it—without finding the statements proved—if the author of this little volume were to say, that it was a readable and valuable work, "just what has been wanted,"—a good thing, and in season. Yet, gentle reader, "and still gentler purchaser," seeing you have paid your dollar! it is most undoubtedly true of the "Rambles" of this "Northurfari,"* your humble and obliged servant.

Dropping the *εγω*, he will tell you how it was. Spending a few years in travel, he found himself, after the "Great Exhibition" epoch, like the unconquered and unconquerable Macedonian seeking for a world to pommel—with his footsteps; and after diligent and long-continued search on all the maps of all the Wylds, Johnstons, and Coltons in Christendom, could find but one land that was untrodden; but one that was not as contemptibly common as Irkoutsk, Timbuctoo, or the Niger itself. ICELAND was the shining bit of glacier, the one piece of virgin ore, the solitary lump of unlicked lava; and straightway to Iceland he went. It might not interest any of his readers to be told whether these pages were written in the saddle or on Mount Hekla; in a tar-painted house in Reykjavik or in a marble palace in London; on the deck of a Danish schooner in a continuous summer day of the Arctic sea, or by the light of bright eyes in Scotia's land. It so happens that the most of them were penned in the ULTIMA THULE, the *Terra Incognita* which they attempt to describe; and very little has been altered or amended since the original draft. The spirit of travel is the freshest at

* Northurfari—*Northern Traveller.*

the time the travel is enjoyed; and all impressions are then the most vivid. What is written on the spot, carries with it a *vraisemblance;* and, though an after revision may add some polish to the style, yet, to a certain extent, it takes away the life and vivacity of the narrative. This "polishing" and "editing" process may reduce it to a dead flat, and, like an attempt to smooth a butterfly's wing, remove the bloom, and leave it but a bony shard. Slang may be bearable, though it can hardly be creditable; puns may be so bad that some might call them positively good; but dulness, and a style that is heavy to stupidity, are the unpardonable sins of authorship. This work, however, may have all, and more than all these faults. There are no accessible books of a late date in our language that give either an intelligible or a faithful account of Iceland. The object of the following chapters has been to present a readable and truthful narrative, to create some interest in the people, the literature, and the productions of the lonely isle of the north; and of the good or ill performance of the task, the public must be the judges.

Washington City, *June* 1, 1854.

RAMBLES IN ICELAND.

CHAPTER I.

"And away to the North, 'mong ice-rocks stern,
And among the frozen snow;
To a land that is lone and desolate,
Will the *wand'ring traveller* go."

HEIGHO! for Iceland. The little schooner "SÖLÖVEN" rides at anchor before Copenhagen. His Danish Majesty's mails are on board, and at four o'clock, A.M., July 1st, we are set on deck. Yes; "we," and a nice lot we are—at least a round dozen, and a cabin scarcely six feet square, with only six berths and a sofa. "Every berth's engaged," said the captain; "and you can't go with us." "Yes, but I can though, if I sleep on deck." So I ran my chance; and, when sleeping hours arrived, I was stretched out on a sort of swing sofa in the middle of the cabin, suspended—like Mahomet's coffin—between floor and skylight. As it turned out, though I took Hobson's choice, I had altogether the best berth in the ship; the most room, and the best ventilation. So up the Cattegat we sailed, or rather down, for the current runs north, towards the German Ocean. The SÖLÖVEN—Anglicé, SEA-LION—is a capital sailer, and we made good headway—the first day exactly sixteen miles; and the next morning found us fast at anchor under the guns of the far-famed castle of Elsinore. Nearly a hundred vessels were in sight, wind-bound like ourselves. "There goes a Yankee schooner!" says our skipper; and faith! right in the teeth of

the wind it dashed by, with the stars and stripes flying. How the little fellow managed to get along, is more than I know; but sail it did, and it was the only craft in sight that was not at anchor. A fisherman came alongside to sell some codfish he had just caught. He asked a dollar and a half—nine marks, Danish—for about a dozen. He and the captain were a long time pushing the bargain, and finally Piscator resolved to take four marks—less than half his first price.

There's no prospect of a fair wind, and most tantalizing it is to be cooped up in our little craft, scarce a stone's throw from shore, and right in sight of gardens, fields, streams, and waving trees. Signalling for a pilot-boat, we soon had one alongside. These water-ousels know their trade, and by a combination among them no one stirs for less than five dollars. The purse was soon made up, and we had a day at Elsinore. Indeed I enjoyed it. Didn't "come from Wittenberg, Horatio?" No, but we came from Copenhagen. Though but twenty-four hours on board, it was a joyous sensation to touch the ground. A lot of people on the quay; sailors of all nations, land-lubbers—like your humble servant—merchants, pilots, idlers, and various other specimens of the *genus homo*. One nut-brown looking chap, with the round jacket and flowing trousers that gave the unmistakable stamp of his profession, rolling the quid in his cheek, and looking at me, sings out, "Old England for ever!" "Yes," says I, "and America a day longer."

Here, at Elsinore, are six or seven thousand people, who subsist on contrary winds, shipwrecks, pilotage, and that celebrated "toll" —a mere five-dollar bill, only—that all vessels pay that trade in the Baltic. Danish vessels pay nothing. If a foreign vessel passes here without paying, at Copenhagen she has to pay double. This toll has been paid for over 500 years; and for this consideration, I am informed, the Danish government keep up the light-houses that guide the mariner in and out of the Baltic. It is not as heavy as the light-house fees of most other nations. This place

is sacred to Shakspeare, and Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, and Ophelia, "the beautified Ophelia"—an "ill phrase" that, a "vile phrase," says old Polonius; and their names still live, albeit their imperial persons,

—— "dead, and turn'd to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away."

All this the Danes seem to remember, for two splendid steamers, the "HAMLET" and the "OPHELIA," run regularly between here and Copenhagen; and, as if to disprove the poet's account, they run in unison with one another. We soon found our way to the castle, about half a mile from town, through a long shady walk, overhung with trees. Somehow, when we read of the castle of Elsinore, and of Bernardo and Francisco keeping sentry before it, and the platform, and the ghost appearing there, it hardly seems as if it was a real castle that we could now see and visit, and climb over, and withal find sentries keeping guard over! But here it is, and as substantial and real as that of Britain's queen at Windsor. I spent an hour on its lofty battlements. Here, too, is the "ordnance," such as the small-beer critics are always abusing Shakspeare for having "shot off." Yes, the theatre manager, actor, and dramatist, in his play of Hamlet, adds to his text "*ordnance shot off within*"—while these small-fry scribblers cry out "anachronism." Yes, they have found out the wonderful fact that king Hamlet reigned here about the year 1200, while gunpowder—"thy humane discovery, Friar Bacon!"—was unknown for more than a hundred years after. Go to: yes, go to Elsinore, and now you'll find ordnance enough to fire off, and blow up all the paltry criticism that has been fired at Shakspeare since he first lampooned Sir Thomas Lucy.

The castle of Elsinore stands close beside the water, the big guns sticking out directly over the Cattegat. On the land side it is defended by bastions, cannon, moat, gates, and drawbridge. The castle covers, perhaps, two acres of ground, enclosing a hollow

square or court-yard in the centre. It is unlike any other castellated pile I have ever seen. At the corners are towers of different heights; the tallest one is about 175 feet high, and looks like a pile of Dutch cheeses, the largest at the bottom. The party I was with were all Danes; and, though their language is cousin-German to our Anglo-Saxon, and I could in part understand it, as if "native and to the manner born," yet I preferred my own. With another party was a very pretty and intelligent German girl, who spoke English, and was acquainted with the place; and to her I was indebted for the best *vivâ voce* account that I had. We were first taken into the chapel, a small and very neat place of worship in the south-east angle of the castle. The glaring and rather gaudy style of the coats-of-arms of the royal and noble families whose dead are here, gave it something of a gingerbread appearance; but otherwise I liked it. I looked in vain for a monument to Mr. Shakspeare's hero. Could I have found that skull of Yorick, "the king's jester," I think I should have carried it off as a sacred relic, and made a present of it to Ned Forrest. Alas! no Yorick, no Hamlet, no Polonius—not one of their "pictures in little," nor even a slab to their memory, could I see. We ascended one of the corner towers—used as a light-house and observatory, and provided with telescopes—from whence we had a fine view of the Cattegat, the island of Zeeland, and the lofty range of Swedish mountains on the opposite coast. Directly across the strait, some three miles distant, is the Swedish town of Helsingborg, a place about the size of Elsinore. The prominent object in it is a tall square tower, probably the steeple of a church. In one room of the castle, where I could fancy the "melancholy Dane" in his "inky cloak," the Queen, with "her husband's brother," and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and old blear-eyed Polonius, too, there was a broad fireplace, with the mantelpiece supported by caryatidæ on each side. When some of our scenic artists are painting "a room in the castle" of Elsinore, for a scene in Hamlet, if they have no better guide, they

may remember the above slight description, if they please. Any traveller visiting Elsinore, will find this room in the north-east corner of the castle, and on the second or third floor. We walked out on the ramparts, and saw a few soldiers: wonder if any of them have the name of Bernardo or Francisco! The men on guard were lolling lazily about, not walking backwards and forwards like English or American sentries. The smooth-mown embankments, the well-mounted guns, and the "ball-piled pyramid," with the neat appearance of the soldiers, showed the good condition in which the castle is kept. No marks of ruin or decay are visible. I tried to find some musket bullet, or something besides a mere pebble, that I could take away as a souvenir, but I could get nothing. A woman was in attendance in the chapel, but no one accompanied us about the castle; no gratuities were asked, no "guides" proffered their obsequious services; but I believe the German party knew the locality, for we found "open sesame" on every latch. I thanked the fair German for her explanation; and we walked to town, back, through the avenue of trees. At four we went to a hotel, and had a capital dinner. I then strolled about the place, looked at the "sights"—all there were to be found—went to a book store and a toy-shop, and bought some prints and some little porcelain dolls.

A very merry day I've had at Elsinore, on the firm earth; and now for the rocking ship. Yes, a pleasant day we've had, but perhaps we shall pay for it hereafter.

Our voyage through the Cattegat had all the delay and uncertainty that ever attends these waters. Strong currents and light and contrary winds make the passage slow; but it is usually far easier coming out than going into the Baltic. In a few days we were north of the German Ocean, beating along the Norway coast with a north-west wind. We passed for two days near the land, and had a good view of the bold mountain scenery north-west of Christiansand. Long piles of mountains, reaching often clear to the water's edge, showed a poor country for cultivation. The

most distant were covered with snow, but the nearest were all of that deep brown tint that reveals a scanty vegetation. Sometimes the strip of green meadow land near the water had a house on it here and there; and once or twice villages of twenty or thirty buildings were seen, all built of wood, and covered with red tiles. We saw none of those famous forests of Norway pine, where the ship timber grows, and which English ship-builders tell you is "from the Baltic." These must be in the interior. On the fourth of July* I was determined to have some fun. The captain had two small cannon on board, and I asked him if I might have some powder to wake up my patriotism. Yes, he was quite willing. I produced some of the good things needful, lemons, sugar, et cetera, and told the captain to mix a monster bowl of punch. He was good at it; the punch was capital, and was soon smoking on the table. Our cannon were iron pieces, not quite heavy enough to knock down the walls of Badajos, but still of size sufficient for our purpose. They were mounted on each side of the vessel, and revolved on swivels. The powder was furnished, and we *banged* away, waking up the echoes of liberty from all the Norwegian mountains. I have no doubt but the pilots along the shore were considerably astonished. Now, says the captain, we want the oration. So up I jumped to the top of the boom, and, in about nine minutes and a quarter, gave them the whole account of the cause, the means, and the manner of Brother Jonathan "lickin' the Britishers." The captain translated it for the benefit of the Danish and Icelandic passengers, and they applauded both the orator and translator. The punch was glorious, the oration was undoubtedly a grand one, the cannon spoke up their loudest; and altogether, for a celebration got up by one live Yankee, it probably has never been surpassed sinee Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga. It was a most beautiful evening, and very pleasing to think that at that very hour millions of my countrymen, far far away over the plains and valleys

* The Anniversary of the declaration of the Independence of the United States.

of my native land, were enjoying the festivities of a day, the events of which will be remembered till time shall be no more.

The weather was pleasant for some days, and we were gradually wafted towards the north-west. Vessels bound to the south-west of Iceland, from Denmark, generally sail near Fair Isle, passing between the Shetlands and the Orkneys. We were carried much further north, the ninth day finding us near the lofty cliffs of the Faroes. I thought after getting past the parallel of 60° north, in the latitude of Greenland, that the weather would be perceptibly colder; and probably it would with the wind constantly from the west or north-west; but with a south-west breeze we had mild, pleasant, summer weather. Sea-birds, particularly gulls, were our constant companions, and while near the Faroe Isles they came about us in immense numbers. One day one of these lubberly children of the ocean tumbled down on the deck, and to save his life he couldn't rise again. He was on an exploring expedition, and I've no doubt he learned something. He didn't seem to admire the arrangements about our ship very much, and altogether he seemed out of his element. We had one or two confounded ugly women on board, and I don't think he liked the looks of them very much. I pitied his case, and, raising him up in the air, he took wing and soared away. No doubt he will ever retain pleasant recollections of his Yankee acquaintance; one of a race who, enjoying their own liberty, greatly like to see others enjoy it too. We had a fine view of the magnificent cliffs of the Faroe Isles, some of them nearly three thousand feet high. They are basaltic, and often columnar, looking much like the cliffs about the Giant's Causeway and Fingal's Cave at Staffa, but far higher.

We continued our course to the westward, lost sight of land, and for some days were floating on a smooth sea, with very little wind. How destitute of shipping is the Northern Ocean! For near two weeks we did not see a sail. Whales frequently came near the vessel, blowing water from their spout like a jet from

a fountain. In my travels by sea I had never seen a whale before, and I looked on their gambols with much interest. The sight of them very naturally called up the words of the good old New England hymn:—

"Ye monsters of the bubbling deep,
Your Maker's praises spout;
Up from the sands ye codlings peep,
And wag your tails about."

It must be understood that I'm fond of quotations, particularly poetry; and all must admit that this is a very appropriate one. Why couldn't good old Cotton Mather, or some of his compeers, have given us some more of this sort? Perhaps he did, but if so, my memory has not recorded them.

The noise of a whale spouting can be heard one to two miles off. He throws the water from thirty to fifty feet high. The whale rises clear to the surface of the water, gives one "blow" and instantly goes under. He generally rises again in one or two minutes, but is sometimes under five minutes. Once as I sat on the bowsprit watching two or three that were playing about, one swam nearly under me, rose up, blew a blast with his water-trumpet, giving me quite a sprinkling, and then sank. I had a good opportunity to see him, and got a fair view of his breathing pipe. It was a round hole in the top of his head, had a slight rim round it, and I should think was about two inches and a half in diameter. This animal, as near as I could judge, was between sixty and seventy feet in length. The top of his head and shoulders was broad and flat, and near or quite twelve feet across. His back, instead of appearing round, was nearly level, and showed room enough for a quartette of Highlanders to have danced a reel thereon. 'Twould have been a rather slippery floor though, and I think a dancer would have needed nails in his shoes.

Loud sung out the captain one day, and looking over the side, close to the ship, deep under the clear water, we saw a shark.

O! it makes me feel savage to see one of these monsters: I want to cut out his heart's blood. Many a good Christian do these villains swallow. The captain told us that one Christmas day when he was in the Pacific, a shark came near, and a large hook baited with a piece of pork was thrown into the water; he instantly seized it, and they hauled the monster up the ship's side, and an officer on board drew his sword and cut him nearly in two, before he was allowed on deck. Each passenger took some part of him as a trophy of their Christmas-day fishing.

I had a few books on board, and did the best I could to make the time pass agreeably. But with all our resources, literary, ornithological, piscatorial, and miscellaneous, there were many dull hours. One calm day I got out my writing materials, and thought I would write a letter, or a chapter of these wanderings. After getting fairly engaged, a sudden shower seemed to dash over me; and looking up, a sailor, "high on the giddy mast," while painting the yard had upset his paint-pot, and down tho white shower came on my hat, coat, paper, and every thing around. We must take things coolly on shipboard, as well as elsewhere, I suppose; for there is no use in getting vexed, whatever may chance. As for the letter, I sent that to its destination, with all its imperfections on its head. I scraped the paint off my hat, and the mate and I set to work to clean my coat. After scrubbing it an hour or two, we fastened a rope to it, and, throwing it overboard, let it drag in the sea a few hours. The soap-suds and old Neptune together took nearly all the paint out, but it never entirely recovered from the effects of the shower from the mainmast. As for books, I left England with the very smallest amount of luggage possible, restricting myself in the reading line to my small Bible, Sir George Mackenzie's Travels in Iceland, and one or two more. At Copenhagen, I purchased six or eight volumes of Leipsic reprints of English works—what the publisher calls "Tauchnitz's edition of standard English authors;" some of them are English works, but by what rule of

nationality he reckons among his *English* authors the works of Cooper and Irving, I do not know. Among the volumes I purchased, were some from Shakspeare, Byron, Scott, Dickens, and Bulwer. I found my reading, as I knew I should, quite too scanty. I would have given something for *Diodorus Siculus*, and good old *Froissart;* two books that it would take a pretty long sea-voyage to get through.

Among our passengers were two or three of the dignitaries of Iceland; one sysselman, and the landfoged or treasurer of the island, William Finsen, Esq. On leaving London I took two or three late American papers with me; and in one of them, the "Literary World," there was, by chance, a notice of a late meeting of the Society of Northern Antiquaries at Copenhagen. Among the names of distinguished persons present, there were mentioned some Danes, some Englishmen, and "some Americans," and among the latter, William Finsen, Esq., of Iceland! I showed this to Mr. Treasurer Finsen, and he was greatly amused to learn that he was a Yankee. We had among our passengers several ladies—one, a Miss Johnson, a very pretty, intelligent, modest appearing Iceland lassie, who had finished her education at Copenhagen, and was returning to her native land to establish a female school. The domestic animals on board were one large, curly-haired, black dog, who rejoiced in the name of "Nigger," and four rather youthful swine, who were confined, or rather were pretended to be confined, in a box. The first day out they leaped the barriers of their stye, and made a dinner on the slender contents of several flower-pots that the lady passengers were taking out to cheer the windows of their parlours in their Iceland homes. The discovery of the depredation was any thing but pleasant, and I believe had the "prices of stock" been taken at that time, live pork would have been quoted as falling, and if not clear down, would have been decided to be, on that ship, a thorough bore. Though they went the "whole hog"—the entire animal in the floral line—that day, they did not sleep or

feast on roses all the voyage. They did not like their quarters overmuch, and would usually manage at least once a day, to get out and go on an exploring expedition round the deck.

Our living on board was I believe, as it usually is on Danish merchant vessels. It consisted principally of a thin, watery compound called "soup," of black potatoes, black beef, and yet blacker bread. At the evening meal we had for drink, hot water frightened into a faint colour by a gentle infusion of China's favourite plant. This drink our captain called "tea." Believing that good order on shipboard is much promoted by subordination and submission to the commanding-officer, I never used to tell him it wasn't "tea." If strength, however, is a sign of life, I must say that this showed very little sign of vitality. It probably contained at least half a teaspoonful of tea to a gallon of water; but Oh! that black bread! it was not so bad an article though, after all. We had one blacker thing on board, and that was our dog "Nigger." The good boys and girls in America, who eat "Indian bread," "wheat bread," "short cake," and "johnny cake," have all read of the peasants of Europe living on "black bread," and wonder what it is. It is made of rye, ground, but not bolted much, if any; and the bread is very dark, a good deal darker than corn bread. At first I did not like it very well, and at Elsinore I purchased a couple of large wheaten loaves. This bread is very dear: I paid half a dollar a loaf; these lasted me about ten days, but before that time the mould had struck clear through them. Not so the black bread. That keeps much better than wheaten bread. The mould walks into it gradually, however, but thoroughly. At first there appeared a green coat, on the side that stood next to another loaf in baking. This coat of mould kept growing deeper and deeper, getting first the eighth of an inch, then a quarter of an inch, and before the end of the voyage, over half an inch deep of solid green. Inside of this the loaf was moist and fresh; and certainly, after getting used to it, it is very good bread. It was the "staff of life" with us;

and considerably like a *staff* the loaves were, being in size and appearance about like a couple of feet of scantling cut out of the heart of an oak. So much for living on shipboard. If we did not fare like princes, we had the consolation of knowing that the fares we paid were very light. So bad fare and light fares went together; and that made it all fair. On the fifteenth day out, we first saw the coast of Iceland. It was an irregular, rocky promontory, ending in Cape Reykianess, the south-western extremity of the island. In two days we saw and passed the "Meal sack"—(Danish, *Meel sakken*)—a singular rock island about eight miles south-west of Cape Reykianess. While passing I took a drawing of it, and certainly very much like a bag of meal it looks. It is near 200 feet high, and about that in diameter, apparently perpendicular all round; on the north a little more so! All over its craggy sides, we could see thousands of sea-birds. As sunset approached we saw great numbers of gannets flying towards it, going to rest for the night. This bird, known as the solan goose, is larger than a goose, and while flying, from its peculiar colour, has a most singular appearance. They are white, except the outer half of the wing, the feet, and the bill, which are jet black, and the head a sort of brownish yellow. A word more about these birds, and some others, hereafter. South-west of the Meal sack a few miles, is another singular island called "The Grenadier." It is a most striking looking object, standing up out of the ocean several hundred feet high, like some tall giant or lofty pillar. What a constant screaming of sea-fowl there is at all times about these lonely islands! But where is the night in this northern latitude, in the summer season? Ask the lovely twilight that continues for the two or three hours that the sun is below the horizon. At midnight I read a chapter in the Bible, in fine print, with perfect ease. At a distance of several miles I could tell the dividing line between the rocks and the vegetation on the mountains. And what a splendid panorama of mountain scenery this singular country presents! unlike any thing that I

have ever seen on the face of the globe. Finally, on the nineteenth day of our voyage, our little bark dropped anchor in the harbour of Reykjavik, and our cannon announced to the Icelanders the arrival of the "Post ship" with letters and friends from Denmark. Then, with expectation about to be gratified, I stepped ashore on the rocky coast of Iceland.

CHAPTER II.

There is not one atom of yon earth
But once was living man;
Nor the minutest drop of rain
That hangeth in its thinnest cloud,
But flowed in human veins;
And from the burning plains
Where Lybian monsters yell,
From the most gloomy glens
Of Greenland's sunless clime,
To where the golden fields
Of fertile England spread
Their harvest to the day;
Thou canst not find one spot
Whereon no city stood.

SHELLEY.

AND this is Iceland!—but I see no ice. This is the island that is shown to us in our geographical books and maps, as a small white spot on the borders of the Arctic Ocean, and described as a cold, dreary, and uninteresting region, inhabited by a few dwarfish and ignorant people, who have little knowledge of the world, and of whom little is known. The names of one or two of its mountains are given, and some place is mentioned as its capital or largest town. That the country itself, or any thing that is to be found here, is worth a journey to see, or that the history or habits of the people possess any degree of interest, has not, probably, crossed the minds of a thousand persons. There is, however, a vague tradition, and some persons actually believe that the Icelanders, or some other people from among the northern nations, once sailed to the American shores prior to the voyages of Columbus. What may be the prominent characteristics of

this ULTIMA THULE—this farthest land—what its productions are, how extensive the country, how numerous the population, and how the people live, there have been few means of knowing. But Iceland is not a myth, it is actual and real, a solid portion of the earth's surface. It is not, either, what every one supposes, nor what we have reason to believe it is, from its name, its location, and the meagre descriptions we have had of it. But it has not been thought advisable to leave this country entirely alone, especially in an age of travel and discovery like the present. The Yankee is here; his feet tread its heath-clad hills and snow-covered mountains. He has boiled his dinner in the hot-springs, cooled his punch in snow a hundred years old, and toasted his shins by a volcanic fire. But a "chiel" may come and take his notes: every thing of interest, past events and present existing things, cannot be seen by one pair of eyes. Let us draw a little from the manuscripts of the Iceland historians. We can find as reliable and as permanent records of this people, and their early voyages and discoveries, as we have of the voyages of Columbus, the warlike achievements of William the Conqueror, or the campaigns of Napoleon Bonaparte. These records are the "Sagas," or historical writings of the Icelanders, written soon after the events transpired; and they are now in existence in the public libraries of Iceland and Denmark. Some of these are in Latin, some in the old Norse, and some in Icelandic; and duplicates of some of the more important have been made by publishing them in *facsimile*, just as they stand on the original parchment. The most important of these record with a good deal of minuteness the "Ante-Columbian discovery of America." Some account of the early history of this singular people, and particularly a notice of the early voyages of the Northmen, which I gathered from historical records here in Iceland, and from the Icelanders themselves while travelling through the land, will be of interest before speaking of the present appearance of the country.

Iceland was first discovered by Naddod, a Norwegian pirate,

in the year 860, almost one thousand years ago. He was thrown on the coast in the winter, and from the appearance of the country, he called it Snæland, or "Snowland." Four years after, Gardar Swarfarson, a Swede, circumnavigating it, found it an island, and named it "Gardar's Holm," or Gardar's Isle. His account of the country was so favourable, that Floki, another sea-rover, went there to settle; but, neglecting to cut hay in the summer, his cattle perished in the winter. From the vast accumulations of ice on the west coast, ice that was driven over from Greenland, he called the country *Iceland*, a name it has ever since borne. In 874, the first permanent settlement was made in Iceland, by Ingolf, a Norwegian chieftain. Greenland was discovered in 980, one hundred and twenty years after the discovery of Iceland. In 982, Eric, surnamed the Red, sailed to Greenland, and, in 986, established a settlement there which flourished for more than four hundred years. To induce settlers to go and reside in the new country, the most fabulous accounts were given of the climate and productions. The face of the country was represented as clothed in green, and it was even stated that "every plant dropped butter." The name of *Greenland* thus given to it, was as great a misnomer as *Iceland* applied to the neighbouring isle. In reality, the two countries should change names; for Iceland is a country of green fields and fair flowers, while Greenland is covered with almost perpetual ice and snow. Eric the Red had a companion in his Greenland settlement, whose name was Heriulf. Biarni, the son of Heriulf, sailed from Iceland to join his father in Greenland, was driven south, and landed on the American coast—probably Labrador. Thus, the first discovery of America by Europeans was in the year 986, by Biarni Heriulfson, a native of Norway, though he sailed from Iceland. He returned north, landed in Greenland, and gave an account of his discovery. Subsequent voyages to the American coast were made by Leif and his two brothers, sons of Eric the Red, who after the style of names in Iceland were called Ericsson.

I am speaking on good authority in saying that a gifted Swede, now an American citizen, and most prominent before the world, is a direct descendant of Eric and his son. I allude to Captain Ericsson, the inventor of the Caloric ship, a pioneer in American discovery, and a worthy descendant of the Ericssons, pioneers in the discovery of America. Another interesting fact may be noted. Among the early settlers in America—for a settlement was formed, that continued several years—some of the men had their wives with them. One of these, the wife of Thorfin, while in America, gave birth to a son, who was named Snorre. This Snorre Thorfinson was the first native-born American of whom we have any account, and may be set down as the first Yankee on record. From this Thorfinson was descended Thorwaldsen, and also Finn Magnusen, the historian and antiquary, so that we can almost claim the great sculptor of the North and the great historian as Americans. These facts I gathered from Icelandic genealogical tables; and all who have investigated the history of the northern nations, know with what accuracy these tables are compiled. To return a little in my narrative. Leif Ericsson having purchased the ship of Biarni Heriulfson, sailed from Greenland in the year 1000. The first land he made he called *Helluland*, or "land of broad flat stones." This was doubtless the coast of Newfoundland. The next coast he saw was covered with forest, and consequently he named it *Markland*, or "Woodland." This was probably Nova Scotia. The next land he discovered, still farther south, produced vines and grapes, and this he named "VINLAND," a name the Icelanders ever afterwards used in speaking of the American Continent. We have the best of proof in their account of the climate and productions, in the length of the days, as well as in their maps and drawings, that their settlement was on some part of our New-England coast, probably Massachusetts or Rhode Island. In subsequent voyages, these adventurous navigators sailed farther south; and it is supposed

from the account they gave, that they proceeded as far as Virginia and the Carolinas. Timber, furs, and grapes, were the most valuable articles the country produced; and for these, several voyages were made to Vinland, from Greenland, houses were built, and settlers resided in the country for at least three years; from 1011 to 1014. In their intercourse with the Indians, the Iceland and Greenland adventurers carried on their business after the same political code that Raleigh, John Smith, and others adopted afterwards. They first traded with the Indians, then fought them. They sold them red cloth in strips the width of a finger's length, and in return, received their furs and skins. As their cloth grew scarce, they cut the strips narrower; and finding they could buy just as many skins for a strip an inch wide, as if it was four inches, they cut it narrower and narrower, till they got it down to a finger's breadth. The Indians bound it about their heads, and were greatly delighted with its ornamental appearance. Finally the red cloth grew scarce, and then the Indians gave their furs for soup and other eatables; and thus—to use the words of an Iceland historian, they "carried off their bargains in their bellies." In the first skirmish that occurred in the new settlement, the Northmen seemed to get the worst of it, and fled towards their boats, when Freydisa, daughter of Eric the Red, and wife of Thorvard, caught up a spear and turned on the Indians, reproaching her countrymen for their cowardice. By her heroic example, the Indians were defeated, so we find that the successful issue of the first battle between Europeans and North American Indians, was owing to the courage of a woman. Voyages continued to be made to America, from both Greenland and Iceland, to as late a period as the middle of the fourteenth century. The last trip of which we have any record, is that of a vessel sent from Greenland to Markland (Nova Scotia) for timber and other articles. While returning, it encountered heavy storms, and was driven into port in the west of Iceland. The old Greenland settlements con-

tinued for a long period, the latest account we possess coming down to the year 1484. When they perished, or from what cause, is unknown. Remains of churches and other buildings are found there to this day. We now come to one of the most significant facts connected with the discovery of the American continent. It is doubly proved in the records of that period, THAT COLUMBUS SAILED TO ICELAND, IN THE YEAR 1477. An account of this is given by the Iceland historians, and published in the "Antiquitates Americanæ." It is also recorded by Columbus himself, in a work of his "on the five habitable zones of the earth." In this book, which is now extremely rare, he says, in the month of February, 1477, he visited Iceland, "where the sea was not at that time covered with ice, and which had been resorted to by many traders from Bristol." It will be remembered that John and Sebastian Cabot were both from Bristol. Humboldt, in his "Cosmos," speaks of this voyage of Columbus to Iceland, and of the record of it made by the great navigator himself in his work on the zones. Humboldt also speaks at considerable length of the early voyages of the Icelanders and Greenlanders to America; and of all these events he speaks as he does of other well established historical facts. So let us hear no more of the "vague tradition," the mere "thought" or "belief," that America was known to the early navigators of the north. Let it be spoken of as one of the well-known, and clearly authenticated historical facts in the history of the world. It takes nothing from the merits and reputation of Columbus. And what if it did? The reader of history is a seeker after truth, and most certainly the writer of history should be. During the visit of Columbus to Iceland, he might have conversed in Latin with the bishop of Skalholt, or other learned Icelanders, on the subject of the early voyages of the Northmen to America, but this does not seem at all probable. Had this been the case, some record or mention of it would probably have been made, either in the writings of Columbus or of contemporary

historians. Then, too, in his early struggles to obtain material aid to prosecute his geographical researches, he omitted no facts or arguments that would be likely to convince the kings and queens whom he applied to, that his theory of the earth was correct, and that land would be found by sailing to the west. His first voyage, too, was for the purpose of finding China or the Indies, and not in the direction of the Vinland of the Northmen. When he discovered land, he believed it to be some part of the East Indies; and, to the day of his death, Columbus never knew that he was the discoverer of a new continent. One of the oldest of the sagas or historical documents from which the facts were gathered respecting the early discovery and settlement of America, was the saga of Eric the Red. The statements in this and other historical papers, are corroborated in old Iceland geographies, and also by some European writers, particularly by Adam of Bremen, a theological writer, nephew of Canute, King of England. He says that while he was in the north, propagating Christianity, Swein Ethrithson, King of Denmark, gave him an account of these discoveries. This was about the year 1070.

If we trace the history of Iceland from its first settlement to the present time, we shall find that the intelligence, activity, prosperity, and happiness of the people, and the rise and progress of the arts and sciences among them, have been exactly proportioned to the liberal and republican spirit of their government. For fifty-four years—from the first settlement of Iceland, in 874, to the year 928—it was a Norwegian colony, governed by chiefs. As the population increased, and the infant settlement waxed strong, difficulties arose between the rulers and the ruled; and finally the people threw off their allegiance, framed a constitution, and set up a republican government, which continued for 333 years. The close of this era was in the year 1261. All the native historians agree in calling this the Golden Age of Iceland. During this period Greenland was discovered and

settled, the continent of America was discovered, and an enterprising, daring, and successful series of voyages was carried on, that eclipsed the efforts of all previous navigators. Christianity was established and bishops appointed both in Iceland and Greenland, poetry and history were cultivated, and a degree of intellectual activity was shown, beyond that of any country in the north of Europe. Thrown on their own resources, in a cold and dreary climate, the same causes operated in raising up a vigorous, moral, and intellectual people, that was shown in the history of our own Pilgrim Fathers. It was during this period that the most valuable and important sagas were prepared and written; papers that show the successful enterprise of the northern voyagers. "The wonderfully organized free state of Iceland maintained its independence for three centuries and a half, until civil freedom was annihilated, and the country became subject to Hako VI., King of Norway. The flower of Icelandic literature, its historical records, and the collection of the sagas and eddas, appertain to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries." * During these two centuries, their poets—skalds or minstrels—visited nearly every court in Europe, and composed and sung their lyrical productions. They were attached to the suites of kings and princes, attended warriors to the battle field, and celebrated the exploits of their employers in undying verse. Instances are recorded, where a king has died, that his praises were sung so ably by his minstrel that he was installed in his place, and filled the vacant throne. In the Iceland republic the chief officer was called the "LAUGMAN," or administrator of the laws. He was elected by universal suffrage. Their national assembly or congress was known as the "ALTHING," and had both legislative and judiciary powers. The members were elected by ballot, and when they met formed but one body, the president, or laugman, presiding over their deliberations. They assembled in the open air at a place called Thingvalla, and large numbers

* Humboldt's Cosmos.

of the people gathered round them as spectators. I walked over the ground, where this primitive congress had met for nearly a thousand years. It is a raised circle of earth, shaped like an amphitheatre, and now overgrown with grass. On one side was a mound, a little higher than the rest, where the president sat. Though the powers of the Althing were greatly abridged at the fall of the republic, yet they continued to meet in this house, without a roof, until the year 1800. At that time the Althing was removed to Reykjavik, and has ever since met in a building. Their sessions are annual, and always held in the summer. At the end of each session, a journal of their proceedings and reports of the debates are published in a volume. The Icelanders have ever regretted, and with good reason, the removal of their congressioual meetings from the primitive location of Thingvalla, to the town of Reykjavik, where they are surrounded by dissipation and the corrupting influence of foreign merchants. The scene at Thingvalla, at the time of my visit, July, 1852, was solitary, quiet, and peaceful. Oxen, sheep, and horses, were grazing on every side; and the mower was whetting his scythe and cutting the grass where legislators and grave judges had assembled and made laws for the people. The scenery is grand and picturesque. It is directly before the Thingvalla lake, the largest in Iceland, and surrounded, on the north and east, by lofty mountains. Thingvalla has thus been the legislative capital of Iceland, until its final removal to Reykjavik, in the year 1800; though Skalholt—once the location of a church and a bishop's see, though now nothing but a farm—is erroneously given as the capital, in most of our books of geography.

Foes within, not enemies without, overthrew the Iceland republic. A corrupt body of chiefs aud rulers sold it to Norway, in the year 1261; aud, one hundred and nineteen years afterwards—in 1380—it was, with that power, transferred to Denmark; and under the government of that country it has ever since remained. Until about the year 1490, their maritime trade

was open to all nations, and vessels of every flag were allowed to take cargoes to Iceland. After that, for three hundred years, the commerce of the country was either held by the Danish crown or farmed out to merchants and traders, and often to foreign companies. The only rule of action in letting out the trade of the country seemed to be, to dispose of it to the highest bidder. Most of these companies oppressed and starved the poor Icelanders into compliance with the most rigorous and exacting measures. As the country produced neither grain, fruit, coal, nor wood, they were dependent on commerce with foreign countries for all the luxuries and many of the necessaries of life. Trade being taken entirely out of the hands of the Icelanders, they necessarily grew dispirited; their ambition was crushed, and, though ardently attached to their country, they could but mourn over their unhappy lot. Since 1788, commercial affairs have been on but little better footing, the trade being entirely in the hands of the Danish merchants, but not farmed out to a company. The trade, foreign and domestic, is open to both Danes and Icelanders, but to no others. No foreign vessels are allowed to visit Iceland for purposes of traffic, unless they carry coal or timber, or go with cash to buy the products of the country. As there are no merchants but Danes in all the commercial towns, foreign traders would never find purchasers for their cargoes of timber or coal were they to go there.

At this time the legislative powers of Iceland are vested in the Althing, and presided over by the governor, who is called the Stifftamptman. This body is composed of twenty-six members, one from each county or syssel—twenty in number, elected by ballot—and six appointed by the king. All the members of the Althing must be residents of the country, but they may be either Danes or Icelanders. When an act is passed by a majority, it must be sent to Copenhagen for the approval of the king, and if not signed by him does not become a law. The Icelanders very naturally desire "free trade," and wish to have

their ports thrown open to the competition of the world; but the Danish merchants and shipowners in Iceland and Denmark, enjoying, as they now do, a monopoly of the commerce, are all opposed to this. In the session of 1851, the king's councillors—the six he appointed—prepared a bill, and introduced it, allowing foreign vessels to trade here, but with the proviso that they should pay a tonnage duty of about one rixdollar per ton. The trade of Iceland being neither extensive nor lucrative, this would amount to just about a complete prohibition. The other members nearly all opposed the bill, saying, "Give us free trade or nothing;" and it never passed the house. The governor was incensed to see the will of his royal master thwarted; and like some governors in our old colonial times, he disolved the Althing, and they broke up in a grand row. It was adjourned over for two years, to meet again in 1853. The friends of free and unrestricted trade in Iceland, are in hopes of having a law passed before many years, opening their ports to the ships of all nations alike. The "Stifftamptman," or governor, is appointed by the king, and holds his office during the pleasure of his Majesty. He is usually a Danish nobleman, and receives a salary of 3000 rixdollars a year, which is paid by the Danish government. There are three amptmen or deputy governors, residing in the northern, southern, and eastern quarters of the island. The Stifftamptman, residing in the west, renders a fourth amptman unnecessary. The governor presides at all sessions of the Althing, manages all state affairs, presides over the post-office department, and carrying the mails, and is in every respect the head of the state, without a cabinet or advisers. There is a treasurer—or landfogcd, as he is termed—who is also appointed by the crown, and receives a salary of 2000 rixdollars a year. The public funds are kept in an iron chest in the governor's house, under the protection of a double lock and two keys, one of which is kept by the governor and the other by the treasurer. Both of these are necessary to open the chest. The principal

officer in each county, or syssel, is called the sysselman, and is elected by the people. The sysselman is both sheriff and magistrate; and all suits at law in his syssel are tried before him, an appeal being allowed to the Supreme Court at Reykjavik. The supreme Court is presided over by the chief justice, who is appointed by the crown, and holds his office permanently. The sysselmen, in their respective syssels, call all public meetings, convene elections, and preserve order.

In the useful arts, so far as their productions and circumstances will allow, and in moral and religious improvement, Iceland has kept pace with the world. Printing was introduced in the year 1530; and the Reformation, which had being going on in Europe for some time, extended to Iceland in 1551. The Roman Catholic Church at this time, the established religion of the country, had become so corrupt, that the last Catholic bishop and his two illegitimate sons were beheaded for murder and other crimes. Since then to the present day, the religion of the country has been Lutheran, and there is said to be not a person residing in Iceland except Protestants. Such is a slight sketch of the settlement and progress of this isolated country.

CHAPTER III.

Happy the nations of the moral North,
Where all is virtue. * * *
Honest men from Iceland to Barbadoes.
* * * * * * Man
In islands is, it seems, downright and thorough,
More than on continents.

BYRON.

THE geographical features of Iceland, and the manners and customs of the people, are no less interesting than the history of the nation. Iceland lies just south of the polar circle, between sixty-three and a half and sixty-six and a half north latitude, and between thirteen and twenty-four degrees west longitude from Greenwich. Its length from east to west, is about two hundred and eighty miles, and its average width one hundred and fifty. In extent of surface it is nearly as large as the State of New York, containing not far from forty thousand square miles. It is three hundred miles east of the coast of Greenland, a little over five hundred from the north of Scotland, nearly one thousand from Liverpool, thirteen hundred from Copenhagen, and about three thousand miles from Boston. The coast is deeply indented with bays, its valleys are drained by large rivers, and every part abounds more or less with lofty mountains. Though volcanic regions have many features in common, Iceland differs greatly from every country in the known world. It presents a greater array of remarkable natural phenomena than can be found throughout the whole extent of Europe and America. To the naturalist and the man of science, to the geologist, the botanist, and the ornithologist, it is probably less

known than any equal tract of accessible country in the world. The burning chimneys of Ætna, Vesuvius, and Stromboli, have given inspiration to Horace and Virgil, and been minutely described by the pens of Strabo, Diodorus Siculus, and Pliny. Not so the region of Hekla and Skaptar Jokull. In the Mediterranean states, art and nature can both be studied; in Iceland, nature alone, but nature in her wildest moods. But how will those mountains in the south compare with these in the north? All the volcanoes in the Mediterranean would scarcely extend over more ground than a single county in the state of New York, while Iceland is one entire volcanic creation as large as the State itself. Though not active all at once, yet throughout the length and breadth of the land may be found smoking mountains, burning sulphur mines, hot springs that will boil an egg, and jets of blowing steam that keep up a roar like the whistle of a gigantic steam-engine. The volcanic region of Iceland may be set down as covering an area of sixty thousand square miles; for volcanoes have repeatedly risen up from the sea near the coast, and sometimes as far as seventy miles from land. Though Ætna is higher than any mountain in Iceland, and of such enormous bulk that it is computed to be 180 miles in circumference; yet if Skaptar Jokull were hollowed out, Ætna and Vesuvius both could be put into the cavity and not fill it!

Iceland, too, is classic ground. Not, however, in the same sense that Italy, Sicily, and Greece, are. The hundred different kinds of verse now existing in many volumes of Iceland poetry, the sagas, and other literary productions of the Icelanders, have not been read and re-read, translated and re-translated, like the works of Herodotus, Xenophon, Tacitus, and Cicero, and for very good reasons. The country is not one of such antiquity; it is not a country renowned for arts and arms, and overflowing with a numerous population. As a state, it is nearly destitute of works of art, and its scanty population can only procure the

bare necessaries of life. Scarcely a page of Icelandic literature ever put on an English dress and found its way among the Anglo-Saxons, until the pen that gave us Waverley and Rob Roy, furnished us with a translation of some of the more important of the Iceland sagas. The author of the "Psalm of Life" and "Hyperion" has given us some elegant translations of Iceland poetry.

On stepping ashore in Iceland, the total absence of trees and forests, and the astonishing purity of the atmosphere, strike the spectator as among the more remarkable characteristics of the country. The fields are beautifully green: the mountains, clothed in purple heath, appear so near that you are almost tempted to reach forth your hands to touch their sides. At fifteen or twenty miles distance, they appear but three or four; and at seventy or eighty miles, they seem within ten or fifteen. Such is the effect of the magical purity of the atmosphere. In other countries you go and visit cities and ruins; here you see nature in her most fantastic forms. In other states you pay a shilling, a franc, or a piastre, for a warm bath in a vat of marble; here you bathe in a spring of any desired temperature, or plunge into a cool lake, and swim to the region of a hot spring in the bottom, guided by the steam on the surface. In other lands you step into marble palaces that are lined with gold and precions stones, and find hereditary legislators making laws to keep the people in subjection; here you see a grass-grown amphitheatre where an elective congress met and legislated in the open air for nearly a thousand years. In other and more favoured climes, you find comfortable houses, and "fruits of fragrance blush on every tree;" here, not a fruit, save one small and tasteless berry, and not a single variety of grain, will ripen, and their houses are mere huts of lava and turf, looking as green as the meadows and pastures. In other lands, coal and wood fires enliven every hearth; and mines of iron, lead, copper, silver, and gold, reward the labour of the delver; but here, not a particle of coal, not

one single mineral of value, and not one stick of wood larger than a walking-cane can be found. Many of the mountains are clad in eternal snows, and some pour out rivers of fire several times every century. But, though sterile the soil and scanty the productions, our knowledge of the country must be limited if we consider it barren of historical facts and literary reminiscences. A country like this, nearly as large as England, must possess few agricultural and commercial resources, to have at this time, nearly one thousand years after its first settlement, a population of only sixty thousand souls. Yet the Icelanders, while labouring under great disadvantages, are more contented, moral, and religious, possess greater attachment to country, are less given to crime and altercation, and show greater hospitality and kindness to strangers, than any other people the sun shines upon. Their contentment and immunity from crime and offence, do not arise from sluggishness and indolence of character; nor are they noted alone for their negative virtues. They possess a greater spirit of historical research and literary inquiry, have more scholars, poets, and learned men, than can be found among an equal population on the face of the globe. Some of their linguists speak and write a greater number of languages than those that I have ever met in any other country. Iceland has given birth to a Thorwaldsen, a sculptor whose name will descend to the latest posterity. His parents were Icelanders, but he was a child of the sea, born on the ocean, between Iceland and Denmark. Among their poets and historians will be found the names of Snorro Sturleson, Sæmund, surnamed FRODE, or "THE LEARNED," Jon Thorlaksen, Finn Magnusen, Stephensen, Egilson, Hallgrimson, Thorarensen, Grondal, Sigurder Peterssen; and these, with many others, will adorn the pages of Icelandic literature as long as the snow covers their mountains, and the heather blooms in their valleys. Their navigators and merchants discovered and settled America long before Genoa gave birth to a Columbus, and while Europe was yet immured in the darkness of the middle ages. The works of

their poets and literary men have heen translated into nearly every language in Europe; and they in their turn have translated into their own heautiful language more or less of the writings of Milton, Dryden, Pope, Young, Byron, Burns, Klopstock, Martin Luther, Lamartine, Benjamin Franklin, Washington Irving, and many others. In the interior of the country a native clergyman presented me with a volume—an Iceland annual, the "NORTHURFARI," for 1848-9—that contains, among many original articles, the "Story of the Whistle," hy Dr. Franklin; a chapter from Irving's "Life of Columbus;" translations from Dryden; Byron's "Ode on Waterloo;" Burns' "Bruce's Address;" Kossuth's Prayer on the defeat of his army in Hungary; part of one of President Taylor's Messages to Congress; and extracts from the NEW YORK HERALD, the LONDON TIMES, and other publications. With scarcely a hope of fame, the intellectual labours of the Icelanders have been prosecuted from an ardent thirst of literary pursuits. Personal emolument, or the applause of the world, could scarcely have had a place among their incentives to exertion. As an example we need only notice the labours of Jon Thorlaksen. This literary neophyte, immured in a mud hut in the north of Iceland, suhsisting on his scanty salary as a clergyman, which amounted to less than thirty dollars a year, together with his own labours as a farmer, yet found time, during the long evenings of an Iceland winter, to translate into Icelandic verse the whole of Milton's "Paradise Lost," Pope's "Essay on Man," and Klopstock's "Messiah," hesides writing several volumes of original poetry. Throughout their literary and political writings can he seen that spirit of repuhlicanism, and that ardent love of political liberty, which always characterizes a thinking and intellectual people. Interspersed with their own sentiments expressed in their own tongue, will he seen quotations from other writers, and in other languages. With Dryden they say,

> "The love of liberty with life is given,
> And life itself the inferior gift of heaven."

From Byron they quote,

> "Better to sink beneath the shock,
> Than moulder piecemeal on the rock."

And with the noble poet, again, they express their

> "——— plain, sworn, downright detestation
> Of every despotism in every nation."

Such is the literary and republican spirit of this toiling and intellectual people.

The Icelanders live principally by farming and fishing. They take cod and haddock, from five to forty miles out to sea. Whales often visit their harbours and bays, and are surrounded by boats and captured. Their season for sea-fishing is from the first of February to the middle of May. In the summer they catch large quantities of trout and salmon in their streams and lakes. They have no agricultural productions of much value, except grass. Grain is not cultivated, and their gardens are very small, only producing a few roots and vegetables. The climate of the country is not what we would suppose from its location. Columbus, who was there in February, tells us he found no ice on the sea. It is not as cold in winter as in the northern States of America, the thermometer seldom showing a greater degree of severity than from twelve to eighteen *above* zero. In summer, from June to September, it is delightfully mild and pleasant, neither cold nor hot. The cold season does not usually commence until November or December; and sometimes during the entire winter there is but little snow, and not frost enough to bridge their lakes and streams with ice. In summer, fires are not needed, and the climate during this season is more agreeable than that of Great Britain or the United States, having neither the chilly dampness of the one, nor the fierce heat of the other. Thunderstorms in Iceland occur in the winter, but not in the summer.

Their domestic animals are sheep, cattle, horses, and dogs. They rarely keep domestic fowls, but from the nests of the wild

eider-duck they obtain large quantities of eggs, as well as down. Reindeer run wild in the interior, but are not domesticated. Blue and white foxes are common; and these, with eagles, hawks, and ravens, destroy many of their sheep and lambs. White bears are not found in the country, except as an "imported" article, when they float over from Greenland on the drift ice. The domestic animals in Iceland are estimated at—500,000 sheep, 60,000 horses, and 40,000 cattle. All their animals are of rather small size, as compared to those in more temperate regions. Their horses are a size larger than the ponies of Shetland, and average from twelve to thirteen hands high. Their hay is a short growth, but a very sweet, excellent quality. The Icelanders speak of their "forests,"—mere bunches of shrubbery from two to six feet high. These are principally birch and willow. The beautiful heath, so common in Scotland and the north of Europe, is found throughout Iceland. Their game birds are the ptarmigan, the curlew, the plover, and the tern. Nearly every variety of water-fowl common to Great Britain or America, abounds in the bays, islands, and shores of Iceland, and in the greatest numbers. The Icelanders export wool, about 1,000,000 lbs. annually, and from two to three hundred thousand pairs each of woollen stockings and mittens. Besides these articles, they sell dried and salted codfish, smoked salmon, fish and seal oil, whale blubber, seal and fox skins, feathers, eider-down, beef and mutton, hides, tallow, and sulphur. They import their principal luxuries—flour, rye and barley meal, beans, potatoes, wine, brandy, rum, ale and beer, tobacco, coffee, sugar, tea, salt, timber, coal, iron, cutlery, fish-hooks and lines, cotton and silk goods, leather, crockery, and furniture. From thirty to forty vessels sail from Denmark to Iceland every year. Reykjavik, the capital, on the west coast, is the largest town in the island—a place of about 1200 people. Then there are Eskifiorth and Vopnifiorth in the east, Akreyri in the north, and Stykkisholm and Hafnarfiorth in the west,

all places of considerable trade. All goods are taken to Iceland duty free; and letters and papers are carried there in government vessels free of postage, and sent through the island by government messengers. By the present arrangement, the government "post-ship" makes five voyages to and from Iceland in a year. It sails from Copenhagen to Reykjavik on the first days of March, May, July, and October, and from Liverpool to Reykjavik on the first day of January. It leaves Reykjavik, for Copenhagen, February 1st, April 1st, June 1st, and August 10th; and from Reykjavik for Liverpool on the 10th of November. One half of the trips each way, it stops at the Faroe Isles. In addition to the mail service by this ship, letter-bags are forwarded from Denmark by the different vessels trading to Iceland.

All travel and transportation of goods and the mail through the interior of Iceland is on horseback. There's not a carriage-road, a wheeled vehicle, a steam-engine, a post-office, a custom-house, a police officer, a fort, a soldier, or a lawyer in the whole country. Goods, dried fish, and valuables are left out of doors, unguarded, with impunity, stealing being almost unknown. There never was but one prison in the island, and that was used also as an almshouse. Even then it was nearly useless, and almost always without a tenant; and finally, to put it to some use, it was converted into a residence for the Governor, and is now the "White House" in the capital of Iceland. Taxes are very light, and do not amount to as much as the expense of carrying on the government, paying the officers, and transporting the mail. The Icelanders are universally educated to that extent that all can read and write. There is but one school or institution of learning in the country—the college at Reykjavik. This has a president and eight professors, and usually from eighty to a hundred students. The boys educated here are nearly all trained for clergymen, or else to fill some of the civil offices in the island, or they expect to go abroad, or live in Denmark. This institution is endowed by the Danish govern-

ment, and was formerly at Bessasstath, a few miles south of Reykjavik, whence it was removed a few years since. The president is Bjarni Johnson, Esq., a native Icelander, a gentleman of rare accomplishments and learning, and one of the first linguists in Europe. The Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Danish, French and English languages are taught here, as well as most of the sciences. It was during college vacation when I was in the country, and I used to meet in the interior, at their fathers' houses, young men who were students of the college, and who could converse fluently in Latin, Danish, French, or English. The Bible or Testament, and usually many other books, particularly historical and poetical works, are found in nearly every house in Iceland. The population being scanty, with the great majority of the people it is impracticable to have schools, so that education is confined to the family circle. During their long winter evenings, while both males and females are engaged in domestic labours, spinning, weaving, or knitting—by turns one will take a book, some history, biography, or the Bible, and read aloud. The length of their winter nights can be appreciated when we consider that the sun in December is above the horizon but three or four hours. Before and after Christmas he rises, sleepily, at about ten o'clock, and retires between one and two in the afternoon. This is quite different from the earlier habits and longer visits of that very respectable luminary in more temperate and tropical climes. True, he makes atonement in the summer, when he keeps his eye open and surveys the land daily from twenty to twenty-one hours. Then he rises between one and two o'clock in the morning, looks abroad over a sleeping world, and only retires behind the mountains at near eleven o'clock at night.

While travelling in the country, I used frequently to ask the children in poor families to read to me in Icelandic, and I never saw one above the age of nine years that could not read in a masterly style. Their writing, too, is almost invariably of

great elegance. This is partly owing to their practice of multiplying copies in manuscript, of almost all the historical and poetical works written in the country, copying them in advance of their publication, and often afterwards. The manners and customs of the people have changed with the progress of time and the change in their form of government. In old times we are told, that when the Icelanders or Norwegians were about setting out on any expedition of importance, they used to have a grand feast. At these banquets, horse-flesh was one of their luxuries. Bards and minstrels would recite poems composed for the occasion; and story, song, and hilarity, added zest to the entertainment. After eating, drinking, and singing, to a pretty high degree of elevation, they would close the proceedings by throwing the bones at one another across the tables! We are not informed, however, that the modern Icelanders indulge in these luxuries. Their trade is gone, and they are now a simple, pastoral people. In complexion the Icelanders resemble the Anglo-Saxon race, often having florid and handsome countenances. They are fine figures, frequently tall, several that I have seen being over six feet in height. Light hair most usually prevails, but I have seen some that was quite dark. In a large district in the north-west of Iceland, all the men wear their beards, a practice that has been in vogue for hundreds of years. They always seem pleased when a stranger appears among them who has adopted a fashion so much in accordance with their own philosophy, with nature, and the laws of health, and at the same time that adds so much to the personal appearance of the lords of creation.

CHAPTER IV.

Ask where's the North: at York 'tis on the Tweed,
In Scotland at the Orcades; and there
At Greenland, Zemhla, or the Lord knows where.
Essay on Man.

——— Hvar er norður ytst?
Sagt er i Jork, það sè við Tveit;
Segir Skottinn: við Orkneyjar;
En þar: við Grænland, Zemblu, sveit
Sett meinar það—og guð veit hvar.
Pope's Essay; Icelandic version.

We landed at Reykjavik at six o'clock in the morning. Though the sun was near five hours high, scarce a person was up. At this season the sun evidently rises too early for them. Sleep must be had, though, whether darkness comes or not. Reykjavik with its 1200 people, for a capital city, does not make an extensive show. The main street runs parallel with the low gravelly beach, with but few houses on the side next the water. In one respect this is a singular-looking place. Nearly all the houses are black. They are principally wooden buildings, one story high, and covered with a coat of tar instead of paint. Sometimes they use tar mixed with clay. The tar at first is dark red, but in a little time it becomes black. They lay it on thick, and it preserves the wood wonderfully. I walked through the lonely streets, and was struck with the appearance of taste and comfort in the modest-looking dwellings. Lace curtains, and frequently crimson ones in addition, and pots of flowers—geraniums, roses, fuchsias, &c.—were in nearly every window. The white painted sash contrasted strongly with the dark, tar-coloured wood. After

hearing a good deal of the poverty of the Icelanders, and their few resources, I am surprised to find the place look so comfortable and pleasant. The merchant usually has his store and house under one roof. The cathedral is a neat, substantial church edifice, built of brick, and surmounted by a steeple. This, with the college, three stories high, the hotel, a two-story building with a square roof running up to a peak, and the governor's house, a long, low, white-washed edifice built of lava, are the largest buildings in Reykjavik. Directly behind the town is a small fresh-water lake, about a mile in length. What surprises me most is the luxuriance of the vegetation. Potatoes several feet high, and in blossom, and fine-looking turnips, and beds of lettuce, appear in almost all the gardens. In the governor's garden I see a very flourishing-looking tree, trained against the south side of a wall. This is not quite large enough for a main-mast to a man-of-war, but still it might make a tolerable cane, that is, provided it was straight. It is about five feet high, and is, perhaps, the largest tree in Iceland. Certainly it is the largest I have yet seen. The temperature now, in midsummer, is completely delicious. The people I am highly pleased with, so far as I have seen them. There is an agreeable frankness about them, and a hearty hospitality, not to be mistaken.

I have just had a ride of six or seven miles into the country, to Hafnarfiorth. Professor Johnson, the President of the College, accompanied me. We rode the small pony horses of the country, and they took us over the ground at a rapid rate. The country is rough, and a great part of it hereabouts covered with rocks of lava. We passed one farm and farm-house where the meadows were beautifully green, strongly contrasting with the black, desolate appearance of the lava-covered hills. One tract was all rocks, without a particle of earth or vegetation in sight. The lava had once flowed over the ground, then it cooled and broke up into large masses, often leaving deep seams or cracks, some of them so wide that it took a pretty smart leap of the

pony to plant himself safe on the other side. At one place where the seam in the lava was some twenty feet across, there was an arch of rock forming a complete natural bridge over the chasm. The road led directly across this. We passed near Bessasstath, for many years the seat of the Iceland college. Near this, Prof. Johnson showed me his birthplace. The house where he was born was a hut of lava, covered with turf, and probably about as splendid a mansion as those where Jackson and Clay first saw the light. Suddenly, almost directly under us, as we were among the lava rocks, the village of Hafnarfiorth appeared. This is a little seaport town of some twenty or thirty houses, extending in a single street nearly round the harbour. We called on a Mr. Johnson, a namesake of my companion, and were very hospitably entertained. The table was soon covered with luxuries, and after partaking of some of the good things, and an hour's conversation, we had our horses brought to the door. Our host was a Dane, a resident merchant of the place, and he had a very pretty and intelligent wife. They gave me a pressing invitation to call on them again, the which I promised to do—whenever I should go that way again! I returned the compliment, and I believe with sincerity on my part. That is, I told them I should be very happy to have them call at my house when they could make it convenient. Now, some of the uncharitable may be disposed to say that all this ceremony on my part was quite useless. True, I lived thousands of miles from the residence of my entertainers, that is, if I may be said to "live" any where; and, being a bachelor, I had no house of my own, nor never had; but if I had a house, and Mr. and Mrs. Johnson would call on me, I should be very glad to see them!

I should mention that Prof. Johnson speaks English fluently; mine host, not a word; neither could I speak much Danish; but with the learned professor between us, as interpreter, we got along very well. A violent shower had fallen, while we were coming; but it cleared up, and we had a pleasant ride

back to Reykjavik, arriving about eleven o'clock, a little after sunset.

After a few days at the capital, I prepared for a journey to the interior. A traveller can take "the first train" for the Geysers, if he chooses; but that train will hardly go forty miles an hour. It is only seventy miles; but if he gets over that ground in two days, he will do well. There's plenty of steam and hot water here, and "high pressure" enough; but you may look a long while for locomotives; or—if I may perpetrate a bad pun—any motives but local ones, in the whole country. Roads —except mere bridle paths—or vehicles of any kind, as I have mentioned, are unknown in Iceland. All travel is on horseback. Immense numbers of horses are raised in the country, and they are exceedingly cheap. As for travelling on foot, even short journeys, no one ever thinks of it. The roads are so bad for walking, and generally so good for riding, that shoe-leather, to say nothing of fatigue, would cost nearly as much as horseflesh. Their horses are certainly elegant, hardy little animals. A stranger in travelling must always have "a guide;" and if he goes equipped for a journey, and wishes to make good speed, he must have six or eight horses; one each for himself and the guide, and one or two for the baggage; and then as many relay horses. When one set of horses are tired, the saddles are taken off and changed to the others. The relay horses are tied together, and either led or driven; and this is the time they rest. A tent is carried, unless a traveller chooses to take his chance for lodgings. Such a thing as a hotel is not found in Iceland, out of the capital. He must take his provisions with him, as he will be able to get little on his route except milk; sometimes a piece of beef, or a saddle of mutton or venison, and some fresh-water fish. The luggage is carried in packing trunks that are made for the purpose, and fastened to a rude sort of frame that serves as a pack-saddle. Under this, broad pieces of turf are placed to prevent galling the horse's back. I prepared for a journey of some

weeks in the interior, and ordered my stores accordingly. I had packed up bread, cheese, a boiled ham, Bologna sausages, some tea and sugar, a few bottles of wine, and something a little stronger! I had company on my first day's journey, going as far as Thingvalla. There was a regular caravan; about a dozen gentlemen, two guides, and some twenty horses. My "suite" consisted of guide, four horses, and a big dog, Nero by name, but by the way a far more respectable fellow, in his sphere, than was his namesake the old emperor. Our cavalcade was not quite as large as the one that annually makes a pilgrimage to Mecca, but a pretty good one for Iceland. We had with us, Captain Laborde, commander of the French war frigate now lying in the harbour, and several of his officers, Mr. Johnson, president of the college, and some of the Reykjavik merchants. Nationally speaking, we had a rather motley assemblage, albeit they were all of one colour. There were French, Danes, and natives; and —towering above the crowd (all but one confounded long Icelander)—mounted on a milk-white charger eleven hands high, was one live Yankee! We were to rendezvous in the morning on the public square, and be ready to start at seven o'clock. Notwithstanding great complaints that travellers sometimes make of the slowness of Iceland servants, we were ready and off at half past seven. On we went, at a high speed, for Thingvalla is a long day's journey from Reykjavik. The Iceland ponies are up to almost any weight. There was one "whopper" of a fellow in our company, mounted on a snug built little grey that seemed to make very light of him. Indeed 'twas fun to see them go. The animal for speed and strength was a rare one; the rider, not quite a Daniel Lambert:—

> "But, for fat on the ribs, no Leicestershire bullock was rounder;
> He gallop'd, he wallop'd, and he flew like a sixty-four pounder."

No etiquette touching precedence on the road. You can go ahead and run by them all, provided your pony is swift enough, but if not, you can go behind.

To all appearance, an Iceland landscape does not come up, in point of fertility, to the Genesee country or the Carse of Gowrie. "Magnificent forests," "fields of waving grain," and all that, may exist in western New York, in Old Virginia, or in California; but not in Iceland. We passed, during the first five miles, one or two farms with their green meadows; then, mile after mile of lava and rock-covered fields. Was the reader ever in the town of De Kalb, St. Lawrence County, New York? That fertile and beautiful grazing country, where the sheep have their noses filed off to a point, so that they can get them between the rocks, to crop the grass! That paradise of the birds, where the crows carry a sack of corn with them while journeying over the country, lest they starve on the way, and tumble headlong on the plain! That delightful region will give a little, a very slight idea of some part of Iceland. By the way, that old town in New York, methinks, is quite rightly named. The name was given it in honour of that Polish nobleman who poured out his blood and yielded up his life on the field of Camden, in the sacred cause of American liberty. Brave Baron De Kalb! Green waves the pine—I once trod the turf—where thou did'st fall. We treasure thy name and title, and endeavour to remember thy virtues, by calling a town after thee—*barren De Kalb!*

In speaking of rocks in Iceland, it will be borne in mind that every mineral substance here is volcanic—lava, pumice, trap, basalt, jasper, obsidian, &c. The whole island is undoubtedly one entire volcanic creation, produced by a submarine eruption. In the whole country there has never been seen a particle of granite, limestone, mineral coal, iron or precious metal, or any of the primitive formation of rocks. The lava is almost all of a dark colour, usually brown; some of the very old is quite red, and the new very black. It is scattered about, piled up in heaps, regular and irregular, and of every imaginable shape and form. About a mile and a half from Reykjavik is a large pleasant valley of green grass. This is a common pasture for all the

cows and some of the horses that are owned in the town. A few miles brought us to the valley of the Laxá or Salmon River; and here is a very good farm, the owner of it hiring the salmon fishery, which is the property of the crown. Several thousand salmon are taken here every year. The mode of catching them is somewhat peculiar. The river has two separate channels, and when the fishing season arrives, by means of two dams, they shut all the current off of one, and, as the water drains away, there they are, like whales at ebb tide; and all the fishermen have to do is to go into the bed of the stream, and pick them up. Then the water is turned from the other channel into the empty one, and there the unlucky fish are again caught. The period of the salmon fishing is one of interest to the whole community. They are sold very cheap throughout the country, and those not wanted for immediate consumption are dried and smoked, and many of them exported. These smoked salmon are often purchased here as low as a penny sterling a pound, and taken to England and sold from sixpence to a shilling.

In travelling over the country our "road" was seldom visible for more than a few rods before us, and sometimes it was rather difficult to trace. On stony ground the ponies had to scramble along the best way they could. On the grass lands there were paths, such as animals travelling always make. Sometimes these were worn deep through the turf; and a long man on a short pony, when the paths are crooked and the speed high, has to keep his feet going pretty lively, or get his toe-nails knocked off! I got one fall, and rather an ignominious one. My pony threw me full length on the grass, but I had not far to fall and soon picked myself up again. On assessing the damage, I found it consisted of one button off my coat, a little of the soil of Iceland on both knees, and a trifle on my face. The pony kicked up his heels and ran away; but one of the gentlemen soon caught him, and I mounted and rode off again. About half way to Thingvalla, we stopped where there was some grass for our horses,

and had breakfast. Starting at seven gave a good relish to a *déjeuner* at eleven o'clock. An hour's rest, and we were again in the saddle. In the morning it rained hard, but towards noon it cleared up, and we had pleasant weather.

Our road led through one of the most desolate regions I ever saw on the face of the earth. But, however rocky and forbidding in appearance the country may be, there is always one relief to an Iceland landscape. A fine background of mountain fills up the picture. Then, too, there is a magical effect to the atmosphere here that I have never seen any where else. The atmosphere is so pure, the strong contrasts of black, brown, and red lavas, and the green fields and snowy mountains, make splendid pictures of landscape and mountain scenery, even at twenty miles' distance. Captain Laborde said, in all the countries where he had travelled, he never saw any thing at all like it, except in Greece. As we approached lake Thingvalla, he said the mountains opposite formed a perfect Grecian picture. I have thought myself a pretty good judge of distances, and have been very much accustomed to measure distances with my eye, but here all my cunning fails me. At Reykjavik I looked across the bay at the fine range of the Esjan mountains, and thought I would like a ramble there. So I asked a boatman to set me across, and wait till I went up the mountain and had a view from the top. He looked a little queer, and asked me how far I thought it was across the bay. "Well," I replied, "a couple of miles, probably." As the Kentuckian would say, I felt a little "chawed up" when I was told that it was thirteen or fourteen English miles, that the mountain was near 3000 feet high, and I should require a large boat, several men, a guide, and provisions, and that it would be a long day's work to begin early in the morning! I left, I did.

There are few measured distances in inland travel here. They go by time, and will tell you it is so many hours' ride, or so many days' journey to such a place. We were seven hours to-day in

going from Reykjavik to Thingvalla, and I think we averaged five miles an hour. It is probably thirty-five or thirty-six miles. Much of the way the roads were bad, and we walked our horses; and when they were good we put them through at the top of their speed. Our fat friend with his pony, did not steeple-chase it much;

> "But, those who've seen him will confess it, he
> Marched well for one of such obesity."

About ten miles from Thingvalla we came to a house, a solitary caravansera in the desert. We resolved to patronise it, and halted; and while the ponies were contemplating the beauties of the mineralogical specimens that covered the ground, we took some refreshment. That is, those who indulge in the use of the weed that adorns the valleys of the land of Pocahontas, took a slight fumigation; but having some ham in my provision-chest, I did not wish to make smoked meat of myself then. So I pulled from my poke—look the other way, Father Matthew!—a "pocket-pistol," and extracted a small charge! It was not loaded with any thing stronger than the products of the vineyards of France. The "hotel" was one story high; and, without trying to make much of a story about it, it had but one room, walls of lava, and minus the roof. It is needless to say, the hotel-keeper had stepped out. It had one piece of furniture, a wooden bench, and on the slight timbers that supported what had been a roof, were the names of sundry travellers. I took out my pencil, and in my boldest chirography wrote the illustrious name of—"JOHN SMITH!"

A few miles from our caravansera we came to the banks of the lake of Thingvalla, or, in Icelandic, "Thingvalla vatn." This lake is about ten miles long, and the largest body of water in Iceland. It is of great depth, in some places over 1,000 feet deep. The town, or place, or what had been a place, is at the north end of the lake. Just before arriving there, while jogging along on

the level ground, we came suddenly upon the brink of an immense chasm, 150 feet deep, and about the same in breadth. This was one of those seams or rents in the earth, common in Iceland; originally a crack in a bed of lava. Its precipitous sides and immense depth seemed at once a bar to our progress; and without a bridge over it, or ropes or wings, we saw no way of getting along without going round it. Without seeing either end, and wondering how we were to get round it, we were told we must go *through it.* And sure enough, the animals, as well as the guides, seemed to understand it; and if we had kept in our saddles I actually believe they would have found their way down this almost perpendicular precipice. We, however, dismounted, and in a steep defile were shown a passage that much resembled the "Devil's Staircase," at the Pass of Glencoe, in the Highlands of Scotland. By picking and clambering our way down some pretty regular stairs—and our horses followed without our holding their bridles—we made our way to the bottom. There we found grass growing; and, while our ponies were feeding, we lay on the turf and admired this singular freak of nature. We were in the bottom of a deep chasm or defile, the wall on the west side being over a hundred feet high and on a level with the country back of it. The wall on the east side was lower, and beyond this wall the country was on a level with the bottom where we were. By walking a short distance to the north, in this singular defile, we found the wall on the east side broken down by a river that poured down the precipice from the west, and being thus imprisoned between two walls, it had thrown down the lowest one, and found its way into the Thingvalla lake. This chasm is called the *Almannagjá* (pronounced Al-man-a-gow), or "All-men's cave." In former days, when the Althing, or Icelandic Congress, met at the place, all men of consequence, or nearly all, used to assemble here; and no doubt they admired this singular freak of nature. The river here, the Oxerá, in pouring over the precipice forms a most splendid cataract. Here is

Thingvalla, a once important place, and, as I have mentioned, for nearly a thousand years the capital of the nation. It is now a mere farm, and contains two huts and a very small church. This church is on about the same scale of most of the churches in Iceland. It is a wooden building, about eighteen feet long by twelve wide, with a door less than five feet high. It is customary for the clergyman or farmer—and the owner of the land is often both—to store his provisions, boxes of clothing, dried fish, &c., in the church; and strangers in the country often sleep in the churches. Some travellers have made a great outcry about the desecration of turning a church into a hotel, but with all their squeamishness have usually fallen into the general custom. Surely if their tender consciences went against it, they had "all out doors" for a lodging place. I have not yet arrived at the honour of sleeping in a church, though I have slept out of doors; and when I have tried both, I will tell which I like best. A tent has been presented to the important "town" of Thingvalla, by the liberality of the French officers who visit the coast; and this was pitched for our use. The clergyman here—who is also farmer and fisherman—a pale, spare, intellectual-looking young man, received us very kindly. It was the hay season, and the ground was covered with the new-mown hay. Two of the working-men of the farm had that day been out on the lake, fishing in a small boat. They came to the shore as we rode up, and I had the curiosity to go and see what they had caught. And what had they? Who can guess? No one. Over two hundred and fifty fresh-water trout, all alive and "kicking." They were large, handsome fellows, and would weigh from one to three pounds each. Not a fish that wouldn't weigh over a pound. But didn't I scream? "Oh, Captain Laborde! Rector Johnson! I say; come and see the fish. Speckled trout, more than two barrels-full." Well, hang up my fish-hooks; I'll never troll another line in Sandy Creek. The tent pitched, some trout dressed, and a fire built in the smithy, and we soon had a dinner

cooking, and such a dinner! Well, say French naval officers on shore, Icelanders, Yankees, and Cosmopolites, cannot enjoy life "in the tented field!" But this chapter is long enough, and I'll tell about the dinner in my next.

CHAPTER V.

——"he was a bachelor, * *
* * * * and, though a lad,
Had seen the world, which is a curious sight,
And very much unlike what people write."

HAD that celebrated Pope whose Christian name was Alexander, believed that his immortal Essay would have been translated into Icelandic verse by a native Icelander, and read throughout the country, he would not have vaulted clear over the volcanic isle in his enumeration of places at "the North." And then, too, our poetical Pope is the only pontiff who has any admirers in this northern land. The last Catholic bishop of the country left few believers of that faith in the island.

Yesterday, under the canvass of an Iceland tent, a party was seated at dinner. It was on the bank of the Thingvalla vatn. The hospitable clergyman furnished us trout, and a good sportsman among the French officers produced several fine birds, plovers and curlews that he had shot on the way, often without leaving his horse. We had excellent milk and cream from the farm, and the packing-cases of the party furnished the balance of as good a dinner as hungry travellers ever sat down to. The Frenchmen—like those in the Peninsular war, who gathered vegetables to boil with their beef, rather than roast it alone as the English soldiers did theirs—our Frenchmen—gathered some plants, that looked to me very like dandelions, and dressed them with oil and vinegar for salad. Though it was rather a failure, it showed that an eye was open to the productions of the country, albeit it was not a perfect garden. I picked a bird

for my share of the work—picked him clean, too, and his bones afterwards—and found it as good as a grouse or pheasant. With fine Iceland brushwood from a "forest" hard by, a fire was made in the blacksmith's shop, and there we roasted fish, flesh, and fowl. As the rest of the party were to return the next day to Reykjavik, and as I had a long tour before me, they would not allow me to produce any thing towards the feast, but insisted on my dining with them. I was too old a traveller to refuse a good invitation, and accepted at once. The tent was pitched on a smooth plat of grass before the lake, and a quantity of new mown hay, with our travelling blankets and saddles, made first-rate seats. I know not when I have enjoyed a dinner more than I did this. The Frenchmen conversed with their own tongues in their own language; some of the party spoke Danish, and several Icelandic; I gave them English—and every other language that I knew—the modest Iceland clergyman expressed himself in Latin, and Rector Johnson talked them all. Time flew by—as he always flies, the old bird!—while the big white loaves, the trout, the game-birds, the sardines, ham, and bottles of wine, disappeared rapidly. We drank, not deeply, to all the people in the world—kings and rulers excepted, for they always have enough to drink to their good health and long life; and we toasted, among others, "all travellers of every nation, and in all climes, whether on land or sea," and hoped that none were "seeing the elephant" more extensively than we were. So passed our dinner. The clergyman was with us; and he appeared to enjoy the foreign luxuries, as we all enjoyed every thing about us, viands, company, scenery, &c.

Touching the fish that swim hereabouts, and the so-called "sport" of angling, I am told that the Iceland trout and salmon show a most barbarous indifference to the attractive colours of all artificial flies that are ever thrown them by scientific piscators. Our clerical farmer-fisherman, who hauls up the finny tribes in the Thingvalla vatn, uses no barbed piece of steel to tear their

innocent gills—"a pole and a string, with a worm at one end and a fool at the other"—but pulls them up in crowds with a net. He seems to think as some others do of the barbarous old angler,

> "Whatever Izaak Walton sings or says;—
> The quaint old cruel coxcomb, in his gullet
> Should have a hook, and a small trout to pull it."

After dinner, the clergyman took us about to show us the "lions" of the place. Thingvalla, in a historical point of view, is by far the most celebrated and interesting locality in Iceland. An account of their republican congress, or Althing, that met here, has been given in a former chapter. The meeting of courts and legislative bodies among all the Scandinavian tribes, was in the open air. The word Thingvalla is from *thing*, a court of justice, and *valla*, a plain. Undoubtedly from the same origin are the names of Tingwall, in Shetland, and Dingwall, in the north of Scotland. The cognomen "law" is given to several hills in Scotland, and undoubtedly in consequence of courts of law being held on them in former times. Such is the tradition attached to them.

The place here where the Althing met was a most singular and convenient one. Except from six to twelve inches or more of soil on top, the earth here is solid rock that was once lava. There are two wide and deep seams or cracks in this lava-rock, that meet at an acute angle, and stretch away in different directions into the plain. Between these, in a small hollow, shaped like an amphitheatre, is the place where the Althing met. These seams or chasms are like natural canals, from twenty to fifty feet wide, and said to be two hundred feet deep. They are filled up to within twenty or thirty feet of the top, with still, black-looking water, and are said to have a subterranean communication with the lake about half a mile distant. Here, on this triangular piece of ground, covered with grassy turf, the general

assembly of the nation gathered once a year, in the summer season. Those connected with the Althing were inside these natural chasms, but spectators were outside, beyond the boundaries of the court. This was, indeed, a primitive house of representatives. Though the Icelanders are a staid, sober, matter-of-fact people, undoubtedly many anecdotes and singular legislative scenes could be related of events that have transpired at this spot. One was told us by the clergyman, which, from its singular character, has been handed down, though it took place long years ago. The Althing, having both legislative and judicial powers, tried criminals and adjusted differences, as well as made laws. A man was undergoing his trial for a capital offence; and, though in irons, he watched his opportunity and ran, and with one fearful leap vaulted clear across one of the chasms that formed the boundary of the court. We were shown the spot. It is twenty feet wide, and on the opposite side the ground was several feet higher than the bank where he started. The legend says he got clear off, and thus saved his life; going on the principle which the Indian adopted, that if you hang a rogue you must catch him first. Near this primitive capitol is a pool of deep, black-looking water, where females convicted of capital crimes were drowned. A little to the west, we were shown an island in the river, where male culprits were beheaded.

Another evidence of the civilisation of the people during a former age, was shown, quite as palpable as any similar signs in either Old or New England. This was the spot where witches were burned: as late, too, as the commencement of the 18th century. How singular are some contemporaneous events! As the unseen pestilence sweeps through the atmosphere, from one nation to another, so will a moral plague, like the delusion of witchcraft, enchain the minds of a Christian community, and spread death and devastation before it. There are scenes and events in the history of all nations, that the people would gladly blot out if they could. One of our party, a very intelligent

Icelander, told us he had seen, not forty years before, heaps of charred bones, and ashes, on this spot, where innocent people were sacrificed to a belief in witchcraft.

But these assemblies at Thingvalla were principally identified with more pleasant scenes. There was something besides the mere sitting of the supreme court, and the gathering of the people's congress. Sir George Mackenzie has happily expressed the interest of these gatherings. "At the Assemblies at Thingvalla," he says, "though artificial splendour was wanting, yet the majesty of nature presided, and gave a superior and more impressive solemnity to the scene. On the banks of the river Oxerá, where its rapid stream enters a lake embosomed among dark and precipitous mountains, was held during more than eight centuries the annual convention of the people. It is a spot of singular wildness and desolation; on every side of which appear the most tremendous effects of ancient convulsion and disorder, while nature now sleeps in a deathlike silence which she has formed. Here the legislators, the magistrates, and the people, met together. Their little group of tents, placed beside the stream, was sheltered behind by a rugged precipice of lava; and on a small grassy spot in the midst of them was held the assembly which provided, by its deliberations, for the happiness and tranquillity of the nation."

The people looked forward to these annual gatherings with great interest. They met here in large numbers, and from all parts of the country. Friend met friend, sociality prevailed, commodities were interchanged, business was transacted, and all intermingled in agreeable, social intercourse. Many families being here during the time, young men found wives, and maidens obtained husbands; so that the bow of Cupid flung his arrows near the scales of justice. Here, too, idolatry first gave way in Iceland, and here the Christian religion was first publicly acknowledged. This was in the year 1000. At that time, nearly all the people were idolaters. Several zealous Christians were

present, and the subject was discussed at the Althing. The debate waxed warm, and while the discussion was going on, a messenger rushed into the assembly with the intelligence that a volcanic eruption had broken out but a short distance to the south. The idolaters declared it was merely the wrath of their gods at the people for turning away from their ancient creed. "But what," says Snorro Goda, a Christian, "were the gods angry at, when the very rocks where we stand, hundreds of years ago, were melted lava?" The question was unanswerable, the Christians triumphed, and laws were immediately passed protecting all in the exercise of their religion. The ecclesiastical courts were afterwards held here, under the bishop of Skalholt. It is not to be wondered at, that the people wept when the Althing was removed to Reykjavik. Hallowed by the reminiscences of the past, they saw modern innovation and foreign customs break up one of their ancient and venerable institutions. The Althing is for ever removed: their council circle is now a meadow, and I see oxen, sheep, and horses grazing around it.

Captain Laborde took me slily by the arm, led me on one side to a cleft in the lava, and waving his hand towards it, said he begged to have the honour of introducing me to an Iceland tree. And sure enough there it stood, green and flourishing, but of such dimensions that, had I not been aware I was in Iceland, I should have been irreverent enough to have called it a mere shrub, a bush, or perhaps a bramble. I find I was very rash in pronouncing the opinion which I did, that the bush, some five feet in height, that I saw in the governor's garden, was probably the largest tree in Iceland. Now, here was one towering alone in the majesty of luxuriant nature, at least six feet perpendicular; and, were the various crooks and bends that adorn its trunk straightened out, I have no doubt but it would be nine or ten inches higher. I took off my hat, and made a low bow to it. In a meadow near the house, was a rather novel sight—two girls milking the ewes. Here, as elsewhere, we were furnished

with excellent milk and cream. Many a bowl of rich milk have I drank in this country, and never asked where the article came from. After riding all day, and at night going up to a farm-house, half exhausted with hunger and thirst, and getting what would quench it, I have found something else to think of besides letting my fancy go wool-gathering among snowy fleeces, and bleating lambs that go without their supper. When a man leaves his own fireside and country, and goes abroad, he has no business to take all of his prejudices and fastidiousness along with him.*

With the new hay for a bed, our blankets spread over us, and our saddles for pillows, we enjoyed a most refreshing sleep. At breakfast this morning, the clergyman-farmer's dairy and fishing-boat were again laid under contribution. A large raven, one of a pair we had noticed frequently, flew slowly up towards our tent, apparently looking for something to break his fast. Our fowler saluted him with a charge of fine shot, that sent him off at a tangent, and left him minus some of his feathers. A word touching these ravens hereafter. They are among the most ancient of the inhabitants of Iceland.

It was with great regret that I parted from my most agreeable and intelligent company—but separate we must. The French officers, Rector Johnson, and the others, prepared to return to Reykjavik, and I to go towards the east, on a tour of several hundred miles in the interior. They would gladly have continued with me as far as the Geysers, but for some good and weighty reasons. One was, they had no guide to return with them who understood the road, and mine must go on with me. Another reason was, we had all made such terrible havoc with their provision chest, that the remainder would scarcely have stood before a Captain Dugald Dalgetty for a day's campaign. Then, too, fishing-ponds ten miles long and a thousand feet deep,

* I have since learned that the milk used in Iceland is cows' milk, and that the milk of the ewes is made into cheese.

and yielding trout by the boat-load, are not to be found in every valley, even in Iceland. So a hearty shaking of hands, and a buckling of girths, and we were once more in our saddles ; they returning to town, and I and my guide, with faces towards the rising sun, going to see those wonders of nature—the Great Geysers of Iceland.

CHAPTER VI.

"You know I pique myself upon orthography,
Statistics, tactics, politics, and geography."

We shall climb over the mountains and their hard names, and gallop through the valleys a little more smoothly, if we look at the spelling, pronunciation, and meaning of some of the Icelandic terms. A great appropriateness will be seen in nearly all the geographical names in Iceland. By translating the language, we shall see some characteristic feature embodied in the name of about every place, river, lake, mountain, bay, and island in the country. The explanation of a few Icelandic words will show the signification of many of the names that I shall have occasion to mention. The letter *á* (pronounced *ow*) signifies river, and is the last letter in the names of Icelandic rivers. *Bru* is a bridge, hence *bruará*, or bridge river. *Hvit* is white; *vatn*, water or lake; *hvitá*, white river; *hvitarvatn*, white lake. *Hver* is a hot spring; *laug* (pronounced *lage*), a warm spring, and *dalr*, a dale or vale. There is a valley north of Hekla, known as *Laugardalr*, or vale of warm springs. The Icelanders pronounce double *l* at the end of words, like *tl*. They have a distinct name for each description of mountain. *Jokull* (pronounced *yo-kut-l;* or, spoken rapidly as the Icelanders speak, it sounds about like *yo-kul*) is the term used to designate mountains that are covered with perpetual ice. *Fell*, *fjall*, and *fjöll* (pronounced *fee-et-l*, *fee-aht-l*, and *fee-ote-l*), all signify mountains; but *fell* is applied to single peaks, to small and isolated mountains, and *fjall* and *fjöll* to large mountains, or chains of mountains. *Bla* is blue; *snæ*, snow; and we have *blafell*, or a blue mountain standing alone—

an isolated peak in the middle of a plain. A celebrated mountain in the west of Iceland, is *Snœfell Jokull* (*snef-el yo-kul*), a snowy mountain, standing alone, and covered with perpetual ice; and in the comprehensive language of the Icelanders, it is all expressed in two words. *Orœfa* signifies desert or sandy plain, and *torf* is turf or peat. There are two mountains, *Orœfa Jokull* and *Torfa Jokull;* one standing in a desert, and the other in a large peat district. One portion of the immense mountain, the Skaptar Jokull, is known as *Vatna Jokull*, as it is supposed to contain, on a portion of its surface, large pools of standing water. The points of compass are, *north*, *suth*, *œst*, and *vest*. *Eyjar* signifies islands. South of Hekla is a lofty and celebrated mountain known as the *Eyjafjalla Jokull*. To an English reader, unacquainted with the Icelandic, it is a crooked-looking mouthful; but on the tongue of an Icelander it flows off, a round, smooth, sonorous term. They call it *i*-a-fe-*aht*-la *yo*-kull. It defines itself as ice mountain of islands, having numerous knobs or peaks that stand up like islands in the sea. Many Icelandic words are identical with the English, and many others nearly so. It remains for some future lexicographer to show the great number of English words that are derived from the Icelandic. The points of the compass have been noticed; a few more examples will suffice. *Hestr* is a horse; *holt*, a hill; *hus*, a house; *hval*, a whale; *lang*, long; *men*, men; *mann*, man; *sandr*, sand; *sitha*, the side; *gerthi*, a garden; *litil*, little; *mikla*, large (Scottish, *muckle*); *myri*, a bog or miry place; *fjorth*, is a firth or bay; *kirkja*, a church; *prestur*, a priest; *morgun*, morning; *ux*, ox; *daga*, days. "July, or midsummer month," stands literally in Icelandic, *Julius etha mithsumar-manuthur*. *J*, at the beginning of words and syllables in the Icelandic, is pronounced like *y* consonant, and in the middle of a syllable, like *i* or long *e*.

Their affirmative *yes*, is *já* (pronounced *yow*), and their *no* is *nei* (nay). Their counting is much like ours: einn (1), tveir (2),

thrir (3), fjorir (4), fimm (5), sex (6), sjö (7), atta (8), niu (9), tiu (10), ellefu (11), tolf (12), threttan (13), fjortan (14), fimmtan (15), sextan (16), seytjan (17), atjan (18), nitjan (19), tuttugu (20), tuttugu og einn (21), thrjatiu (30), fiörutiu (40), fimmtiu (50), sextiu (60), sjötiu (70), attatiu (80), niutiu (90), hundrath (100), fimm hundrath (500), thusund (1000). The date 1851, in words, would be: einn thusund atta hundrath fimmtiu og einn. This list might be extended to great length, showing the similarity between the Icelandic and the English; but these examples are sufficient for my purpose.

I have a few words for my friends the geographers, who, in their anxiety to Anglicize geographical names, so completely change them that the natives of a country would not recognize their own rivers and mountains when once disguised in an English dress. The Icelandic is the only one of the old Scandinavian tongues that has the sound of *th;* and they have two different letters, one to represent *th* in *thank*, and the other the *th* as heard in *this.* The latter sound is heard in *fiorth* and in *north** —different from our pronunciation of north; and as the letter representing this sound of *th* is a character that somewhat resembles the letter *d*, we find the above words written and printed by the English as *fiord* and *nord.* With the Danes and Swedes, who have neither the sounds nor the letters, it is not to be wondered at that they use *d* or *t* for these sounds. I shall give the Icelandic names in their native spelling, as near as possible, with perhaps the exception of the name of the country—which they write *Island*, but now with us is thoroughly Anglicized as Iceland. They pronounce it *ees-land*, the *a* in the last syllable rather broad. I see no particular objection to using *y* for *j* in *jokull*, as it has that sound; or in substituting *i* for the same letter in *fjorth*, *Reykjavik*, *Eyjafjalla*, and similar cases. I will, however,

* *Icelandic;* fiorð, norð.

protest against an Icelandic *Thane* being turned into a *Dane*, without as much as saying, "By your leave, sir," or ever asking him if he wished to change his allegiance.

If this chapter is dry and technical, it has at least the merit of brevity.

CHAPTER VII.

"And yet but lately there was seen e'en here,
The winter in a lovely dress appear."

PHILLIPS.

ON a bright and beautiful morning, as my agreeable company of the day previous disappeared behind the walls of the Almannagjá, my small party turned towards the east, the bridle-path leading through a forest several miles in extent. Before getting into the thickest of the wood, we found the ground covered with immense rocks of lava, and look which way we would, except a few feet of the path directly before us, the country appeared quite impassable. It may excite a smile to talk of a forest, with the largest trees but six or seven feet high; but these patches of shrubbery dispersed over Iceland, are of great value to the people. They are composed principally of birch and willow. Though nothing but scraggy brush, it is used to make roofs to their houses, and much of it is burned into charcoal for their blacksmithing. I have seen one of their coalpits where they were burning charcoal, and a bushel basket would have nearly covered it. Attached to every farm-house is a "smithy," where scythes, pitchforks, spades, horseshoes, and other articles, are made. Every man is a blacksmith; and some travellers have asserted that the clergy are the best shoe-ers of horses in the land. A Gretna Green blacksmith will answer in case of emergency for a clergyman; and Sir George Mackenzie, while travelling here, had his horse shod several times by Iceland priests. I have not yet had an opportunity of testing the skill of one of these clerical blacksmiths. They have, at least, a poetical licence

for practising the two trades; though perhaps they do not put the shoe on the horse as much as formerly, but

> ———"grown more holy,
> Just like the very Reverend Rowley Powley,
> Who shoes the glorious animal with stilts,—
> A modern Ancient Pistol, by the hilts!"

We crossed one of those deep chasms or cracks in the lava, so common in volcanic regions. Here a natural bridge of lava was left, apparently on purpose for a road across it. While riding along in this miniature forest, a large flock or brood of ptarmigans flew up before us. This, one of the fine game-birds of the mountainous parts of Scotland, is very common in Iceland. From being long out of the habit of shooting, I believe the murderous propensities bred in my youth—with "dad's old musket"—have pretty nearly all evaporated. And why should I regret it? A more cheerful or happy sight than flocks of beautiful birds, young and old, cannot be seen. Then see the terrible contrast of "sulphurous smoke and dreadful slaughter," that follows the "fowler's murder-aiming eye," and all for "sport." The ptarmigan, I believe, is seldom found in America. It is about the size of the partridge of the State of New York, a greyish-brown in summer, and turning quite white in winter. The Icelanders call this bird the *reaper*. Had they game laws here—and thank Heaven they don't require them—it would not be permitted to shoot this bird at this season. The young in this flock, though able to fly short distances, were not over half grown. I have a bit of a confession to make, and I may as well make it now. The day that I was travelling was Sunday! I met several parties of Icelanders, travelling also; the immediate object of our journeying being different: they were going to church, and I was going to see the Geysers. The parties I met were going towards the Thingvalla church, and had on their Sunday's best. They were all on horseback, the universal way of travelling in this country. Indeed, indeed, it was very

queer, the riding of the young Icelandic ladies. These pretty damsels rode just like their brothers. My pen refuses a more elaborate and bifurcated description. The matrons all had a very convenient kind of side-saddle. It was like an arm-chair, the back and arms forming part of a circle, all in one piece. The dame rides exactly sideways, at a right angle with her horse, her feet placed on a sort of wooden step. The saddle must be pretty heavy, but the little animals and their riders seemed to get along very well. There was nothing peculiar about the costume of the females, except the little black caps with long silk tassels, universally worn in Iceland, in doors and out, in place of any other cap or bonnet.

We journeyed towards the south, skirting the shore of the lake some five miles, and then turned to the east, climbing a sharp and steep mountain, but not of great height. From the top we had a fine view of the surrounding country, and to the west, the broad lake, the "Thingvalla vatn." Across the lake, some ten miles distant—though, from the magical purity of the atmosphere, it seemed but a stone's throw—was a range of mountains, sloping down to the water's edge, with patches of snow on their sides. Directly beneath us, at the foot of the mountain, lay the lake with its myriads of trout, and its water a thousand feet deep. Two abrupt islands rise high above the surface. They are mere hills of lava and volcanic matter, without a particle of vegetation. They are called Sandey and Nesey. We travelled some little distance on the broad, flat surface of the mountain, and crossed —by descending into it—one of the deep lava chasms. We did not descend, in going down the mountain to the east, as much as we had ascended; but found it spread itself out into a broad table-land, several hundred feet higher than the lake. With long ranges of mountains before us, we travelled several miles over a most desolate volcanic region, completely covered with lava rocks, scoriæ, and volcanic sand. Like all the lava-covered country, it was broken up in huge, irregular masses, and very

cavernous, in some places showing caves thirty or forty feet deep. No description or picture will give a good idea of the old lava on the surface of the ground, to a person who has never been in a volcanic country. Not the roughest limestone region I have ever seen will bear the slightest comparison with the lava-covered districts—near two-thirds of the surface—of Iceland. In written descriptions of volcanic regions, we often see mention made of "streams of lava." These streams in other countries are usually down the sides of mountains, but here in Iceland they extend for miles along the surface of the level ground, and we are puzzled to know where it came from, for usually we see no crater or mountain any where near. I have seen these "streams" standing up in bold relief, a black, rough, horrid mass, from ten to a hundred feet deep, several hundred yards wide, and one or two miles in length. Brydone, in his observations of Mount Ætna, pulled all the old theologians about his ears by making a calculation respecting the age of the lava, and proving conclusively—to himself—that some of the lava streams from Ætna were fourteen thousand years old. I believe, however, that philosophers have to own themselves baffled in trying to get at the age of lava. After cooling—which often takes some years—and breaking up by the expansion of the air in it, the lava is usually nearly or quite black. After several hundred years it turns a little more towards a brown, or rather gets grey with age, and is covered with a very slight coating of one of the most inferior of the mosses. Very old lava often gets quite rotten, light, and porous, and in this state is frequently very red. Take a thick piece of zinc and break it with a hammer, and you will have a rough surface that, multiplied ten thousand times, will give some idea of a stream of lava. The word "horrible," both in the Icelandic and in English descriptions, is often and most appropriately applied to the fields of lava.

As we travelled east, and approached nearer and nearer the range of mountains, the way became much smoother till we found

ourselves on a plain of black, volcanic sand. Near the base of the mountain range before us, the guide took me aside a hundred yards or so to see a curious volcanic crater called the Tin Tron. It stands near twenty feet above the surface of the ground, like a chimney; but on climbing up the side of it and looking down into it, it appears like a well, but the cavity grows much wider below the surface of the ground. On throwing in a stone, after a little period, it quashed in a bed of water, seemingly some fifty feet below where we stood. One side of it was partly broken away, so we had not to climb clear to the top of it to look down the aperture. I broke off some pieces of lava from the top of the crater with my hands, and found it very soft, light, and porous. This lava was a beautiful purple, and some of it a bright red colour. I brought away several samples. We wound round the mountain and descended into a broad and fertile valley called the "*Laugardalr*," or vale of warm springs. Broad meadows surrounded us, and we could see the steam rising from numerous hot springs in the distance. This valley appeared like an immense amphitheatre surrounded by mountains. I know not that a painter could make much of it, but the Laugardalr is a fine landscape. It is not like a vale in Derbyshire, or a country scene on the banks of the Connecticut. No forests, no grain fields, orchards, fences, or houses, and yet it is a scene of great interest, and not easily forgotten.

I had plenty of time, as we wound our way slowly down the hillside from the elevated table land, and opportunity to observe the peculiarities of the country. Certain little green hillocks to my now more practised eye showed themselves to me as habitations. To the left lay a smooth lake, and in bright lines through the green meadow land were several white-looking rivers. On every side were high mountains, many of them covered on the tops with snow. Here I got the first view of Hekla, though more than forty miles distant. It was black nearly to the top, where were some small snow banks. This

valley, including much that is beyond the Laugardalr, is one of the most extensive and fertile farming districts in Iceland. It extends nearly one hundred miles south to the Atlantic ocean, and is bounded on the east and south-east by Mount Hekla and the Tindfjalla and Eyjafjalla Jokulls. This tract of country is watered by Iceland's largest rivers; the Hvitá or White river, the Brúará, the Túngufljot, the Laxá, and the Thjorsá.

We stopped near the first farm-house, and had the saddles taken off, that the ponies might recruit a little on the fine meadow grass, while we went through that very necessary daily ceremony of dining. The farmer sent me out some excellent milk in a Staffordshire bowl, and soon after he and his wife and daughter came out to see me hide it under my jacket. Madame Pfeiffer, in her snarling, ill-tempered journal, complains greatly of the idle curiosity of the people in crowding about and looking at her. From what I heard of her, she was so haughty that the simple and hospitable Icelanders could not approach her near enough to show her any attentions. I exhausted my little stock of Icelandic in talking with the farmer, praised his farm, his cows, the milk, his country, his wife and daughter, calling the latter handsome—"*fallegh stulkey*"—what a lie!—and giving him a piece of silver, which he seemed to like better than all the "fair words"—"butter without parsnips"—and, jumping into our saddles, away we went.

We passed near the small lake, the *Laugarvatn*, and saw the steam rising from the hot springs near it, but being out of our way we did not visit them. Several hot springs have their source in the bottom of the lake, and only reveal their existence by the steam that rises from the surface of the water. We got into a fine road in a large meadow or bottom land, and I was having a fine gallop across the plain, when the guide called to me to turn aside. I was greatly provoked on his taking me a mile out of the way to show me a cave in the hillside, which he seemed to think was a great curiosity. This wonderful cavern

was about twenty feet deep! I "blowed him up" well for a stupid fellow, and told him he need not show a cave like that to an American, for we had caves that extended under ground farther than from there to the Geysers—some ten miles ahead—and cared very little for such a fox burrow as that. He said he showed it to English gentlemen, and they thought it very grand! Well, I told him, he might show it to English gentlemen, but he better not to Yankees, if he consulted his reputation as a guide. Ascending a hill, we saw to our right another lake, the *Apavatn*. We crossed the Brúará or Bridge river, the only river in Iceland —with one exception, the *Jokulsà*, in the east country—that has a bridge over it. This bridge does not span the river by any means, but it merely crosses a chasm or deep place in the middle of the stream. Our horses waded over the rocky bottom and shallow water forty or fifty yards, when we came to a deep chasm, perhaps ten yards across, and over this a slight wooden structure, about six feet wide, was thrown. In this chasm the water is a most furious torrent, roaring some fifty feet below the bridge. Our horses were somewhat frightened, and required considerable urging to get them to cross the frail bridge. The chasm commences but a little way up the river from the bridge, and there the greatest share of the water in the river pours into it, forming a furious and singular cataract. I stopped my horse a few moments on the bridge, and looked at the angry torrent as it rushed beneath me. The water, except where broken into foam, has a deep green appearance. On the road from Thingvalla to the Geysers, nearly all the way we had mountains on our left, and fine fertile meadows on the right, towards the south. A great deal of the way, a ridge of lava extends along the foot of the mountain, and sometimes, for a long distance, I noticed a strip of fine meadow land between the foot of the mountain and this ridge of lava, the meadow as well as the strip of lava being several hundred yards wide. How this came to be so I could not tell, unless it happened that, after the last eruption of lava,

large quantities of ashes were thrown out of the mountain, covering the lava for some distance from its base, and thus forming a coat of soil where now the green meadow is seen. As I have mentioned before, nearly every foot of land in Iceland shows proofs of volcanic origin, and, without doubt, the entire island was formed by volcanic action. At whatever period that took place, if mortal man could have seen it, there would have been a picture of the power of the Almighty most awful to behold. What a scene! A tract of land forty thousand square miles in extent, rising amidst fire and smoke and earthquakes, from the bottom of the ocean. The action of the volcanoes at the present day giving proofs of subterranean fire, and the constant spouting of numerous geysers and hot springs of water and boiling mud, exhibit scenes of sublimity and grandeur unequalled on the face of the globe.

Crossing a high ridge of lava and winding around the Bjarnarfell mountain, we came in sight of the Geysers, with the clouds of steam rising up, at the base of a hill about three miles from us. We crossed some small streams that came from the Geysers, and observed that the waters were covered with a gilded kind of metallic lustre, such as we often see in stagnant pools. This arose, undoubtedly, from some metallic property in the water itself. Shakspeare, whose eye never missed an appearance of nature, usual or unusual, observed this. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, a man had been off on some expedition, and had no doubt "seen the elephant" somewhere on his route, for on his return one of his comrades said to him,

> ——"thou didst drink the gilded puddle
> That beasts would cough at."

These waters are very good for immersion, if one wants an outward application in the shape of a hot bath; but I think for drinking I would imbibe the "gilded puddle" in Warwickshire rather than suck the slimy waters that flow from the Geysers. Eager to see these wonders of nature, I spurred my pony up to

the margin of the basin of the Great Geyser, and, though in a quiescent state, I shall never forget its appearance while memory holds her seat in my brain. The guide soon led the way to the farmhouse and church of Haukadalr, nearly a mile to the east, where we were to pass the night. A drizzling rain had been falling; I was wet, and greatly fatigued by the unusual exercise of riding on horseback, and glad to get some rest, and defer my examination of the place and its curiosities until the next day. The farmhouse, with its furniture, was better than the average in Iceland, and offered passable accommodations for a weary traveller. After a cup of tea, taken from stores in my own knapsack, I went to my room, crawled under the bed, and soon fell asleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

"It makes my blood boil like the springs of Hekla."

BYRON.

MONDAY, July 26th, 1852, I spent at the Geysers. They rise out of the ground near the base of a hill some three hundred feet in height. Most of the hot springs I have seen in Iceland are at the base of hills. The Geysers are on ground that is nearly level, sloping a little from the hill, and cover fifty acres or more. The springs are over one hundred in number, and of every size and form, some very large, others small, scarcely discharging any water at all. The Great Geyser—"*the* Geyser" par excellence—attracts by far the most attention, as from its great size, the quantity of water it discharges, and the magnitude and splendour of its eruptions, it stands unequalled in the world. It is on a little eminence that it has made for itself, a hollow rock or petrified mass that has been formed by a siliceous deposit from the water. On approaching the place, you readily see where the Great Geyser is, by its large quantity of steam. I walked up the margin of it, and there it was, perfectly quiescent, like a sleeping infant. It is shaped exactly like a tea-saucer, in appearance circular, though it is a little elliptical. By measurement, the larger diameter is fifty-six feet, and the smaller diameter forty-six feet. When I arrived I found this saucer or basin full of hot water, as clear as crystal. The temperature, by Fahrenheit's thermometer, was 209° above zero, only three degrees below the boiling point. The basin itself is four feet deep, and in the centre there is a round hole or "pipe," as it is called, running down into the earth like a well. At the top where it opens into

the basin, this pipe is sixteen feet across, but a little below the surface it is said to be but ten feet in diameter. This pipe is round, smooth, and straight, and is said by Sir George Mackenzie and others who have measured it, to extend perpendicularly to a depth of sixty-five feet. The rocky bottom and sides of the basin and pipe are smooth and of a light colour, nearly white. The quantity of steam that escaped from the surface was considerable, but not nearly so great as I should suppose would come from such a body of hot water. Such is the appearance of this most remarkable fountain while still, and certainly it does not look like a violent or dangerous pool. Without wishing to augur ill of it, certainly it is a great bore. When in an active state, the Geyser is altogether a different thing. When I arrived in the evening, the basin was not above half full of water, but the next morning it was full and running over, though the quantity of water that flows from it is not very great. A slight rising of the water, as if boiling, is seen in the middle of the basin directly over the pipe when in a quiescent state. Now arrived at the Geyser, we must wait its motion, for the eruptions occur at very irregular intervals, sometimes several times a day, and sometimes but once in two or three days. Knowing that it gave a warning —by firing signal-guns—before each eruption, I took the time to go about the grounds and see what there was to be seen. I gathered some fine mineralogical specimens, some beautiful samples of petrified peat, or turf, all roots and vegetable matter turned to stone. Fifteen or twenty yards west of the Geyser is a gully or ravine, with nearly perpendicular sides, and thirty or forty feet deep. I went down into this, and found a little rivulet of warm water in it, the banks being composed of volcanic matter and red earth. I heard a gurgling noise in the bank, and went up to it, and there was a little mud spring of blubbering clay, hot and steaming. While in this ravine, I heard a sudden noise of explosions like cannon two or three miles away, and yet it seemed to be near me, and under the Great Geyser. It was the

subterranean explosions that always precede an eruption. I ran up to the Geyser, and saw the water in a violent state of agitation and boiling, with a quantity of air coming up out of the pipe to the surface. This was all; only a false alarm, and not an eruption. Off I went, on another exploring expedition about the grounds. I heard a violent gurgling up towards the foot of the hill to the west, and went to see the cause of it. About 150 yards from the Great Geyser I found a jet of steam coming out of a hole in the ground, and down out of sight I could hear mud boiling and sputtering violently. I noticed here what I had heard was a characteristic of the hot springs of Iceland, deposits of clay of different colours and of great beauty. It was moist, in a state somewhat like putty, and lying in layers, in several distinct colours. Red, blue, and white were the prevailing tints. It was mostly fine-grained and beautiful, and I could not help thinking would be of considerable value as paints, if it were collected. I gathered some of it, but in the absence of proper things to carry it in, and the long journey before me, I reluctantly left the samples behind. About 140 yards southwest of the Great Geyser I came upon two deep springs or pools of clear water, hissing hot and steaming. These pools appeared two springs of irregular outline, each from ten to fifteen feet across, and nearly or quite thirty feet deep. The water was so clear I could see directly to the bottom. A narrow, rocky boundary separated the two. This boundary, or rather partition, as well as the sides of the spring, was apparently a siliceous deposit or petrifaction caused by the water itself. On going up near the margin, and walking round on every side, I noticed that the earth or rock overhung the springs on all sides, so I could see directly under, and the crust near the margin was very thin, giving it a most awful appearance. If one should approach too near the margin, and it should break off, down he would go to inevitable death in the seething caldron. It is said, if a man is born to be hanged he can never be drowned. Of course

a like immunity attends such a man if he is in danger of being boiled! I should rather meet the fate of Empedocles, and save my boots! A person might very easily run splash into these springs, or rather this double spring, for it is just even full of water, and on level ground. I did not see it till I was just on the margin. Some late traveller here said his guide repeatedly ran across the narrow rocky partition that separated the two. Had he fallen in, whatever might be the temperature of the future world that he would be destined to go to, he would never require another hot bath in this. The guide now showed me the Strokr, or what Sir John Stanley calls the New Geyser. It is a mere hole in the ground, like a well, without a basin or raised margin. It is nine feet in diameter at the top, and gradually grows smaller to about five feet in diameter. The Strokr—a word signifying agitator—is a most singular spring. I looked down into it, and saw the water boiling violently about twenty feet below the surface of the ground. It is situated 131 yards south of the Great Geyser. While looking at this, I heard a noise, and looking up saw a burst of water and steam a little way off, that the guide said was the Little Geyser. It is 106 yards south of the Strokr. I went to it, and found an irregular but voluminous burst of water, rising with considerable noise eight or ten feet high. It played about five minutes, and stopped. I found that it played in a similar way, at pretty regular intervals of about half an hour, throughout the day. About noon, some two hours after the first alarm, I heard again the signal-guns of the big Geyser. The discharges were near a dozen, following one another in quick succession, sounding like the firing of artillery at sea, at a distance of two or three miles. I ran up to the Geyser, and saw the water in a state of violent agitation, and soon it rose six or eight feet, in a column or mass, directly over the pipe. It, however, soon subsided, and the water in the basin, from being full and running over, sank down the pipe till the basin became nearly empty. I was

doomed to disppointment this time, there being no more eruption than this. It was two or three hours before the basin got full of water again. About four o'clock I heard the reports again, and louder than before; the guide hallooed to me, and we ran up near the margin of the basin. The explosions continued, perhaps, two minutes, the water becoming greatly agitated, filling the basin to overflowing, and then, as if the earth was opening, the fountain burst forth with a shock that nearly threw me over. The water shot in one immense column from the whole size of the pipe, and rose perpendicularly, separating a little into different streams as it ascended. Such a spectacle no words can describe. Its height, as near as I could judge, was about seventy or seventy-five feet. The awful noise, as a renewal of the forces kept the water in play, seemed as if a thousand engines were discharging their steam-pipes up through a pool of boiling water. Great quantities of steam accompanied it, but not enough to hide the column of water. We stood in perfect safety within forty feet of the fountain all the time it was playing, which was about six or eight minutes. Well was it said that, had Louis XIV. of France seen the Geysers of Iceland, he never would have made the fountains of Versailles. Compare the work of man, when he makes a spurtiug jet from a pipe with a two inch bore, to a column of boiling water ten feet in diameter, and near a hundred feet high, and rushing up with the noise and actual force of a volcano! Fiddle-de-dee! As well put a boy's pop-gun beside one of Paixhans' sixty-four pounders. I had thought that Niagara Falls was the greatest curiosity, and Fingal's Cave, at Staffa, the most pleasing one that I had ever seen; but—though not all alike—the Great Geyser of Iceland, as a marvellous work of nature, eclipses them both. Give a Barnum the power of a Prospero, and let him gather together, in one placc, the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, Niagara Falls, the Natural Bridge in Virginia, Fingal's Cave, and the Great Geyser, and get a fence built round them. Fury!

What a show-shop he could open! Well, after all, it is a happy thing that the great curiosities of the world are pretty well distributed over the earth's surface. The Geyser played lower and lower, and in the course of two or three minutes after it began to recede, had all sunk down into the pipe, leaving the basiu quite empty, and the pipe also down for about ten feet. This was the first time I had an opportunity of looking into the pipe. The water was scarcely agitated at all, but slowly rising. In the course of two and a half hours the basin was again full and overflowing. According to the most reliable estimates, the maximum height of the eruptions of the Great Geyser is from 90 to 100 feet. Olafsen and Povelsen, two Icelandic writers who flourished near a hundred years ago, estimated the height to be 360 feet; evidently a great exaggeration. Some have attempted to prove by mathematics and the law of projectiles, that water cannot by any force or power be thrown in a stream over ninety-five or ninety-six feet high. Fire-engines disprove this; but at any rate that seems to be about the height of the highest jets of the Great Geyser. Sir John Stanley, in 1789, calculated the height by a quadrant, of the highest eruption that he saw, at ninety-six feet. Dr .Hooker estimated it at 100, and Sir George Mackenzie at ninety feet. The first account of these remarkable fountains dates back about 600 years. To me one of the most remarkable circumstances connected with Iceland is, the constant and regular supply of fire that keeps springs of water at a boiling heat, and sends forth fountains with a force beyond all human power, and with a constant and unceasing regularity, for hundreds, and, for aught we know to the contrary, for thousands of years. Whence is the supply of fuel? Why does it not all get consumed? But a child can ask a question that a man cannot answer. Some have attempted by drawings and illustrations to figure out a theory of pipes, cavities, and conduits under the earth, that, supplied with a constant stream of hot water, would produce the eruptions that

we see. The great irregularity in time and in force seems to set at naught the wisest calculations. We can see the effect produced, and can look on and admire, but the springs of action are hid by the Almighty in the wonderful laboratory of nature.

When the poet spoke of his blood boiling like "the springs of Hekla," he undoubtedly meant the Geysers. A man's blood would be in a state of violent commotion if it equalled the activity displayed by the *Strokr*, or his brother the Great Geyser. The *Strokr* is little less remarkable or interesting than the Great Geyser. Though of less magnitude, it throws its stream of water higher, and wider too, and more varied, in consequence of its rather irregular bore. This bore, or pipe, is somewhat rough and a little crooked; like the Irishman's gun, made for "shooting round a corner." One rule seems to pervade all the geysers or shooting springs of Iceland. The larger they are the more seldom their eruptions. The Great Geyser, from what I can learn, does not give one of its highest eruptions oftener than once in one or two days, the *Strokr* once or twice a day generally, and the Little Geyser every thirty or forty minutes. The *Strokr* can be made to erupt by throwing in stones or turf. The former sometimes choke it up, but turf and sods do not; and moreover they produce a fine effect by giving a black, inky appearance to the water. I made my guide cut up a quantity of turf with a spade, and, piling them up on the margin, we threw them—several bushels at a time—down the well of the *Strokr*. They splashed in the water, which was boiling furiously, as usual, about twenty feet below the top. The ebullition nearly ceased, and we watched it with great interest for some little time, but no eruption seemed to come at the call we had made. We walked away a few steps, thinking that this method of producing an eruption was not infallible, when suddenly it shot forth with a tremendous explosion, throwing its column of dirty water an immense height. As near as I could judge, the water ascended about one hundred and thirty feet. The explosive, or

rather eruptive force, was not quite as regular as in the Great Geyser, but would momentarily slacken, and be renewed, the height of the column sometimes not being over seventy or eighty feet high. How black and inky the water looked! and occasionally pieces of turf were seen flying high in the air. I know not how it was, but after the first surprise was over, I had a most irresistible propensity to laugh; and, considering it a very innocent exercise, I indulged it. After playing about fifteen minutes, it began to slacken, and gradually settled down. It took some time, however, to get over its "black vomit," caused by the turf and earth that we administered. After dropping below the surface, and sinking down into the pipe, up 'twould come again; and, as the water would reach the surface of the ground, it would seem to burst and shoot not only high but wide. The falling water wet the earth for some twenty or thirty feet from the pipe. I picked up some small fragments of the grass turf that we had thrown in, and found them literally cooked.

Some twenty years ago a horse fell into one of the mud springs here at the Geysers, and never was seen afterwards. Poor pony! to be boiled in seething mud was a worse punishment than Falstaff met with when he was pitched into Datchett mead. In the northern part of Iceland, an ox fell into a geyser, and after he was fairly cooked he was blown out by an eruption. Whether he was served up at a banquet afterwards, I have not been able to learn. The pieces of turf that were thrown out of the *Strokr* looked more like pieces of seal-skin than they did like turf. It was enough to alter the appearance of any thing, a boiling of ten minutes in this infernal caldron. There is a singular cave, about a mile in extent, a day's journey north of Thingvalla, that the Icelanders call *Surtshellir*, or Cave of Surtur (Satan)—in English, the Devil's Cave. No Icelandic guide will ever go into it. When travellers explore it they must go alone. They believe it is the habitation of his satanic majesty; and that, when he comes above ground to set the world on fire, he will come up

out of this cave. I wonder if he don't come to the Geysers sometimes to cook his dinner. He might indulge in what Pope calls a feast of "infernal venison." In that case he probably catches a wild reindeer—of which there are plenty in the island—and bakes him on Mount Hekla, instead of taking the witty poet's bill of fare, "a roasted tiger, stuffed with tenpenny nails!"

Though the *Strokr* plays once or twice every day, of its own accord, yet I took a malicious pleasure in provoking it to a "blow out;" and a few hours after the first, I asked the guide to give it another dose of turf. He looked into it, and seeing the boiling rather feeble, said it was no use; it had not yet received strength for another effort. Still he tried it, and we waited to see it "go on a bu'st!" It would not; but about two hours afterwards it exploded, and we saw another grand eruption, similar to the first. Our sensations are altogether different in looking at these works of nature, from what they are at seeing an artificial fountain, however brilliant. In the latter case we know the power that propels the water, but here we look on and wonder at the unseen power that for hundreds of years keeps these marvellous fountains in operation. It would be a problem worth solving to see how far a shaft or excavation in the vicinity of those springs could be carried in a perpendicular direction, before finding water or earth that should be so hot as to stop the progress of the works. Hot springs are scattered all over Iceland, to the number of thousands, and at nearly every step you see lava, volcanoes, or extinct craters. Seeing the constant proofs of subterranean heat, as developed in the hot springs, it cannot be doubted that heat, if not actual fire, would be found at a short distance below the surface, in almost any part of the country. A truce to speculation. I hope the day is not far distant, when experiments and investigations of a scientific character will be made by men of learning, in different parts of this extraordinary country.

There are two or three farm-houses in the vicinity, and near

one of them, in a hot spring, I saw a large iron kettle placed, and in it were clothes boiling. Indeed, if these hot springs were moveable property, would they not be worth something attached to a large hotel or bathing establishment? I boiled a piece of meat for my dinner in one of the springs, and while the culinary operation was going on, I went to a pool in the brook that flows from the Great Geyser, and had a most delicious warm bath. 'Twas all gratis—no charge for heating the water. The brooks that flow from the Geysers all retain their heat more or less for several hundred yards, until they are swallowed up in the icy cold river into which they empty. Some travellers have spoken of a sulphury taste to meat boiled in the Geysers, but I did not observe it. A good many birds were all day flying about the Geysers. They were the *tern* or sea-swallow, a bird very common in Iceland, both on the seashore and inland. The Icelanders call them the *cree*. This bird is common in England, but I never remember to have seen them in America. What light, elegant, and graceful creatures they are on the wing! Their flight is as light and easy as that of the butterfly; in motion, as swift as a swallow, and as graceful as a seagull. They are about the size of the pigeon, with very long wings and a forked tail, like the barn swallow. They are nearly white, with a slight blue shade, like the clear sky; just like that delicate cerulean tinge that the ladies like to give their white handkerchiefs. They kept up a constant cry or scream that was not unpleasant, and often flew so near us that I could see their eyes. I climbed to the top of the hill that is just west of the Geysers, and found it higher than I had anticipated. It looks low in comparison with the high mountain, the *Bjarnarfell*, that is behind it. It is composed of lava, slags, scoriæ, volcanic sand, &c. The back of it is very precipitous; nearly perpendicular. This hill is called Laugarfjall (pronounced *La-gar-fe-at-l*), or hot spring mountain. Between this and the Bjarnarfell is a small river flowing through green meadows. I should have been glad to have ascended the larger

mountain, but had not time without running the risk of missing an eruption of the Great Geyser. I gathered some fine specimens of the petrifactions formed by the water, by breaking them up from the bottom of the brook a short distance from the basin. In appearance they much resemble the heads of cauliflower; in colour, nearly white. The incrustations are far more beautiful a little way from the fountain head than in the basin itself, as the siliceous deposit is made principally as the water cools. I noticed that grass grew over a portion of the ground among the numerous hot springs; but near the sources of them there is evidently too much heat, there being nothing but bare earth around them. There are no springs of cold water in the vicinity.

But night has arrived, and I must depart. Though I had seen all of these remarkable fountains in active play, I was reluctant to leave them. I turned my steps towards the humble cottage of the peasant of Haukadalr, for another night's rest before starting south to see Mount Hekla.

CHAPTER IX.

———It is no dream;—
The wild horse swims the wilder stream.
Mazeppa.

Our pleasant stay at the Geysers was finished, the last look taken; the last piece of bacon that we had boiled in Dame Nature's caldron, had disappeared; the farmer of Haukadalr had given us his good benediction and a hearty grip of the hand, while he pocketed the dollars that we gave him; and, our ponies being ready, we prepared to leave. The old raven, too—for here in Iceland "the raven croaks him on the chimney top," as he did when and where Richard the Third was born—the old raven had croaked out his farewell. There is no blinking the matter; we have to face it. Mount Hekla is in the distance, and visit it we must. It was two days' journey there, and several terrible rivers lay in the route; but hospitable Icelanders lived on the way, and the soft plank floors of orthodox church "hotels" invite the traveller to spread down his blanket and repose. Reader, just glance at a map of Iceland, such a one as Mr. Gunnlaugsonn's —but you haven't got one; then put one "in your miud's eye," or imagine yourself in a balloon about "these parts," and see what a tract of country we have to travel through.

To the north, just about the centre of Iceland, the ranges of the Lang Jokull and Hofs Jokull lift their heads and show their crowns of perpetual snow; to the east lies Skaptar Jokull, once terrible, in an eruption the most devastating that ever occurred, but now hushed in grim repose, and covered with a snow-white blanket. Far to the south is Mount Hekla, with a slight bit of

snow near the top, and rearing its burning summit near six thousand feet above the level of the sea. Encircled by these mountains is a valley, the most extensive tract of fertile land in Iceland, and drained by its largest rivers. Behind us lay the Bruará, and next was the Arbrandsá; but the Hvitá (*Wheetow*), the Laxá, and the Thjorsá, are far the largest, the last more than 150 miles in length, and draining the extensive glaciers of the Hofs and Skaptar Jokulls. These rivers flow in a southwestern direction, emptying into the Atlantic, between the Westmann Islands and Cape Reykjanes. We dashed into the Arbrandsá, and were through it in a hurrry, our ponies making light of the three feet of water and a swift current. Don't ask us how we fared. The rain over head, and the rivers, lakes, and hot springs, had made us amphibious before this, about as effectually as if we had been born otters or sea-gulls. What a splendid meadow we pass through, here in the beautiful valley of the Hvitá! Here the "mower whets his scythe;" and such a scythe!—about two feet long and an inch wide, hung on a straight snath. But don't he cut the grass clean to the turf? He shaves it down as close as some men reap their chins—those that shave at all, I mean—"let the galled jade wince," our beard is uncut. But we were speaking of an Iceland meadow. How can grass grow in Iceland? you ask. Why, right out of the ground; for the soil, though shallow, is quite fertile. An Iceland meadow looks very much like a good pasture when nothing has been in it for some six weeks! grass thick, green, and soft; but very little of it running up to seed. The grass looks like our "red top." White clover would do well, undoubtedly, if they would sow it. Almost every Icelander unites the occupations of farmer and fisherman. In June he goes to sea "to fish for cod," and in July and August cuts and secures his hay. This is a very important operation with the Icelander, for without hay his animals would die in the winter. The hay is given to the sheep and cattle; the horses have to do without. How a race of animals like the

horse manage to live without a particle of attention, shelter, or food, for a long Iceland winter, except just what they can get out of doors, is more than we can divine. I guess they're used to it! They eat the dead grass, often having to paw away the snow to get it; they go on the mountains, gather moss, browse the stunted shrubbery; and when driven from the fields and the mountains, they go down on the sea-shore and pick up sea-weed. When badly pushed with hunger, they will eat fish bones, offal, scraps of leather, wood, heath, and shrubbery, and almost every thing but earth and stones. Still, they very seldom die. They seem hardened by the climate, and fitted to endure the changing seasons as they roll. In winter they get reduced to skeletons, mere skin and bones; but towards the end of May, when the grass begins to grow, it is surprising how quick they get fat. Every horse in our troop is literally fat, and no oats did they ever eat; neither have they swallowed the barrel, for you can't see the hoops on their sides! Were you to offer any grain to an Iceland horse, he would not know what you meant, and undoubtedly would think you joking.

Tell John Gossin, if Tom Spring had been an Iceland pony, Deaf Burke never would have kicked him "where he put his oats." Of course the horses in the towns that are worked, are fed in the winter. The hay being cut and dried is tied up in large bundles and "toted" off on men's backs to the stack-yard. If the distance is long, they sling large bundles on each side of a pony's back, and he carries it off. And big loads they will carry; a pony thus loaded looks like a moving hay-stack. The farmer makes a square yard, walls of stone and turf, and this he fills with long low stacks, which he covers with long strips of turf cut up from the surface of a tough bog grass-field; and when the stack remains over a second summer, this turf grows, and an Iceland settlement presents the curious appearance of houses, stone walls, and hay-stacks covered with green grass like the meadows and pastures on every side.

Scythes, spades, small rakes with teeth about an inch and a half long, pitchforks, and ropes, are all the tools an Icelander uses on his farm. His ropes are made of wool, braided, or wool and hair mixed, the manes and tails of the horses being laid under contribution for the latter article. At the farm of Haukadalr, the traveller astonished the natives considerably, by taking hold of a scythe, and showing them that he could mow. Leaving the fine farm and meadows, we crossed a long stream of lava—a high bleak ridge—and soon reached the bank of the White River, along which we travelled for several miles. Here, for the first time in Iceland, we saw the red-headed pochard (*Fuligula rufina*), the most beautiful of all the duck tribe. This bird, naturalists inform us, is found in North America, near to the Arctic circle; in Europe south, as far as Italy; and east, to the Himalaya mountains in Asia; a pretty wide range for one sweet bird. The pair we saw showed the spirit of ancient Romans by manifesting an unconquerable hatred for *Nero*, our travelling companion. They doubtless had a nest; for they chased us for miles, aud when they got tired of chasing the dog, he would chase them. Beautiful as these birds were, had we carried a gun, it is barely possible that an invitation might have been extended to these pretty creatures to come down and dine with us. Blessed birds: of course I was not so unfeeling as to wish to hurt them!

The pochard is a bird that lives on inland waters, not at sea. His head and neck are reddish brown, with a rich gloss, a "collar" round the neck; back and throat black; other parts brown, white, and mottled. It is about the size of the canvas-back duck. One species of pochard has a beautiful crest of feathers adorning the top of its head. Soon after the pair of birds left us, we saw three or four more. We travelled several miles down the right bank of the Hvitá, and a magnificent river it is. Twice the size of the Hudson at Poughkeepsie, confined between high banks, it rushes its milky-looking flood onwards to the ocean. Indeed, this is a terrible stream.

The banks of the Hvitá, for several miles, are from 100 to 150 feet high, and perpendicular. What an explosion there must have been when that crack burst in the lava, and formed the chasm where the river flows! The stream, too, has undoubtedly worn it much deeper than it was at first. And how swift the river runs! Where will streams be swift, if not on mountainous islands? The water, too, like milk; perhaps the snow colours it! Some have dived a little deeper for the cause, and contend the clay on the mountains colours it. We finally emerged on to a broad plain; and here, near the church and farm of Bræthratunga, the high banks became lower, and we prepared to cross. From certain ominous hints thrown out by the guide, I made up my mind for a swim. The river was nearly a mile wide, but the current was broken by several low islands. We tightened girths, placed the baggage as near on the top of the horses' backs as possible, and rode in. The first island was gained easily enough, the water not exceeding three feet deep. The next channel was a turbulent and fearful-looking torrent. In we plunged, and as ill luck would have it, my pony was the lowest one of the lot—scarcely twelve hands high. The others were over their backs in the water, and mine went a little lower down the stream, got out of his depth, and away we went down the river. My head and shoulders were out of water, but nothing could be seen of the poor pony except his nose and the tip of his ears. I stuck to him like a kingfisher to a black bass, but let him "gang his ain gait," and he pulled for the island. Had it not been a long one, and extended well down the stream, we should have missed it, and gone out to sea, or else to Davy Jones' locker. But we struck the lower end of it, and just saved ourselves. Though I have not experienced cold weather nor snow here, there is one thing that is cold in Iceland, and that is, the milky-looking water in the turbulent rivers. It was by far the coldest bath I ever took. The white pony did the swimming, and he swam like a good fellow, or I should have

jumped off and tried my own flippers. The dog, too, had a hard time of it. Poor Nero, he did not find his swim as comfortable as his imperial namesake used to do in a Roman bath. He swam after us, but the current carried him so swiftly away that he got below the point of the island, and I thought he must be lost. The poor dog howled in despair, and turned back. He was a noble animal, and I really commiserated his unfortunate situation, for he was beyond any help from us. By hard swimming he gained the shallow water, and got back to the island we last left. Now, look at the sagacity of a dog. He saw he must come to us, or be left on the west side of the river, near a hundred miles from home. So he went clear to the upper end of the island, and started again. The diagonal course that his swimming and the current took him, just lodged him on the lower end of the island, where we were. The next two channels were wide, but not deep, and we forded them without difficulty; and after about three-quarters of an hour we climbed up the eastern bank of the stream. We were now about ten miles northeast of Skalholt, that apocryphal capital of Iceland. I saw a beautiful red flower growing on one of the islands in this river, and I stopped and gathered some seeds. Perhaps they will add one to our floral variety in America.

My swim did me no damage—the rain for some days past having seasoned me, so that, like the skinned eels, I was used to it. Be it here recorded for the benefit of poor erring and sinful man, the slave of habit, fashion's minion, Plato's biped without feathers—all erring mortals who mar what God hath made, those who scrape their faces with villainous steel, those who doff Dame Nature's garb, and find no substitute—all these, and any others, if such there be, are informed that this wanderer has never once "caught cold," not the slightest, since this "beard" of mine had six weeks' pith. And this with the damp fogs of England, steamboating in the Baltic, coasting by Norway, "schoonering" in the Arctic sea, camping out in Iceland, swim-

ming the cold rivers, sleeping on the ground, climbing snowy mountains, and various "moving accidents by flood and field," —this is saying something for nearly three years' experience of throwing away the razor. But I see how it is, my friends will never know what a "magnificent Turk" I am, until I get my phiz engraved—brass on wood!—or else put in "dagger o' type;" and this will emphatically say to all my miserable, chin-shaven brethren, Go and do likewise. Ahem, where was I? On the east bank of the White River, shivering with the effects of a cold bath. A broad tract of lava was our road, and no vegetable life for a long distance, save the heath that appeared here and there, now in full bloom. A few hours' ride, part of it through a good farming country, brought us to Hruni. In various directions on our route we saw the steam of hot springs rising up. Hruni is not a large town. It contains a church, a farm, and the residence of the clergyman. Indeed, I was glad to see a friendly roof. It had rained for hours, and though the rain had warmed the ice-water, still 'twas *wet*. I felt as if a log cabin would have been a palace; but here was a house, a good one, a framed building with a wooden roof. Never was hospitality more welcome, nor was it ever extended more freely. It was about three o'clock, and we had been in our saddles since nine, and a long rough and wet time we had had of it. The clergyman, Herre Johann Briem, one of nature's noblemen, indeed, gave me a hearty welcome. He set before me bread, butter, cheese, coffee, milk; and a most capital bottle of port wine he uncorked. I shall not tell how many glasses of it went under my jacket before I left. Indeed, I never counted them.

Mr. Briem was physically one of the finest men I have ever seen. At least six feet three inches high, and well-proportioned, he would have been a striking figure among the grenadiers of Frederick the Great. The house had good furniture, and a fine library covered one wall of his parlour. Here I saw, for the first time in Iceland, the "*Antiquitates Americanæ*," a work issued by

the Society of Northern Antiquaries at Copenhagen, giving the full account of the "Ante-Columbian Discovery of America." Admiring a little book in Mr. Briem's library, a volume of the "*Northurfari*," an Icelandic Annual for 1849, he very politely made me a present of it. I felt ashamed at accepting it; but I could not do otherwise, though I had nothing, not the slightest thing about me, either English or American, that I could present him in return. A fine intellect beamed from Mr. Briem's countenance, and his hospitalities were as graceful as his person was comely. He showed me a splendidly printed volume, a large octavo Danish and Icelandic Dictionary.

All the Iceland clergymen I met were as hospitable as Mr. Briem. Some of the very same clergymen who entertained Ida Pfeiffer, also opened their houses to me; and not a penny of compensation could I ever get them to take, although she states they received her money for entertaining her.

CHAPTER X.

Up the high hill he heaves a huge round stone.
The huge round stone resulting with a bound,
Thunders impetuous down, and smokes along the ground.
HOMER.

ALL pleasant sojourns must end; all oases must fade in the distance as we journey o'er the desert sands of life. Though it rained hard, an hour after I stopped with "mine host," the intelligent clergyman of Hruni, we were in our saddles, and the white, the black, and the chestnut ponies were scampering "over the hills and far away." The farmer of Haukadalr left us here, and Mr. Briem sent one of his farm servants to show us the way. It is two pretty good days' ride from the Geysers to Hekla; and we had yet two large rivers to cross, and sundry mountains, valleys, lava-beds, and green fields to go over or get round, before we were half way to the celebrated volcano. Near the house we passed a very large spring of limpid water that looked most deliciously tempting for a swim. Getting off my horse, I tried the temper of it, and found it 96° of Fahrenheit, just comfortable for a warm bath. Our route took us across the Laxá, a broad, shallow river; and here were some of the best farms I had seen in Iceland. The white clover was here, the first I had seen of it, and the meadows evidently produced nearly or quite double the hay that those did which were seeded down with the native grass alone. The blooming clover whitening the fields gave the land a fine appearance, and half made me think I was back home again. A forest of maple and beech trees would have completed the illusion. I saw here, as I did in other places, caraway grow-

ing spontaneously in the fields; and it was as tall, as finely-flavoured, and as well-seeded as you find it with us. It is not indigenous here; but some being brought to Iceland and planted, it has propagated itself over a good portion of the cultivated parts of the island. The same is true of the white clover.

The meadow lands in Iceland are rough in surface, just in a state of nature, not one acre in ten thousand ever having had the turf broken. They are not ploughed and "seeded down," but get seeded and grassed over by nature. As I have mentioned, there is not a plough or a harrow in the whole country. The garden spots round the houses seldom exceed the sixteenth part of an acre, and they are dug up with a spade. The angelica —*angelica archangelica*—the same that grows in our wet meadows in America, is here grown and used as a salad. It is a native of Iceland. With us it is reputed poisonous; but here I have eaten it, and think it has a very pleasant taste. Many a boy in our Northern States has made a *flute* out of an "angelica stalk;" but probably few of them ever ate it afterwards, or thought of applying the Highland proverb to it, "Here's baith meat and music, quoth the dog when he ate the piper's bag." Every thing in Iceland seems to go by contraries, the angelica and "red top" grass, and other of our aquatic and swamp plants, flourishing everywhere, on dry as well as on wet soil.

The peasant soon returned, leaving us to pursue our way south. In the valley of the Laxá the lava is seen in great variety of colour. Much of it is in high, red hills, as bright as if it had been painted; some of it is black, and some brown. The red was the softest and most porous. Some of the hilly river-banks were crumbling down like slate cliffs, but a near view showed them to be lava. A few miles travel brought us to the banks of the Thiorsá, a mighty river, far larger than any we had seen, and I believe the largest in Iceland. It comes from near the interior of the island, and cannot be much less than 200 miles long. It drains the waters that flow from the glaciers

of Hekla, Hofs Jokull, Skaptar Jokull, Vatna Jokull, and Torfa Jokull. A profile view of this river, as laid down on the large map of Iceland, shows the highest branches of it to be 3,000 feet above the level of the sea; half as high as Mount Hekla.

Here was a ferry, the first we had seen. The Thiorsá is nearly three-quarters of a mile wide here; and its depth—I believe I will not tell how deep it is—ask the great northern diver, for he may have been to the bottom of it: I have not. The farmer-ferryman and his son left their hay-field, and in a stout skiff rowed us across. The horses were tied together in a string, the nose of one to the tail of another; and the guide sat in the stern of the boat, and led the forward one. The poor ponies had hard work in swimming the cold river, and seemed to suffer somewhat. They tried hard to get into the boat, but that would have shipwrecked us inevitably. The powerful current threw us a long distance down the river before we landed on the south side. The boatman charged me half a dollar, Danish, about thirty cents; cheap enough certainly for his fatigue and danger. At eight o'clock we arrived at the farm and church of Skarth, where we tarried all night. The clergyman of the parish does not live here, but the obliging farmer did every thing he could to make me comfortable. I think I stated that I had arrived at the dignity of sleeping under the bed. That is a luxury that until lately has only been accorded to princes. The eider-down bed, from the Iceland eider-duck, has long been noted for its lightness and softness. It is perhaps the greatest non-conductor of heat that can be used as a covering. It is altogether too warm. A down bed a foot thick looks as if it would smother you when put on top of the bed, but its perceptible weight is nothing. I usually kicked off this down covering long before morning, for it is impervious to all the insensible perspiration, and consequently in less than half an hour the sleeper finds himself perspiring profusely. I sometimes put the down bed under me, and used my Highland plaid for a covering. The unhealthiness of down beds

has been discovered, and kings and nobles have ceased, in a great measure to use them; and consequently the price of down has greatly fallen, and now every peasant can afford to have a bed of down. Here I slept in a church for the first time. Learning that it was customary for travellers in Iceland, I had no scruples at sleeping under the same roof with the church mice. As we are all destined to take a long sleep some day in a churchyard, or somewhere else, I thought I might as well begin now, try it by degrees, and see how I liked it. I did not know but the rapping ghost of old Thor with his sledge hammer would rap confusion into my noddle, after his usual Iceland style of "thunder in the winter;" but I was not disturbed. I slept perfectly sound, till the sun was high in heaven. The green mounds around the church looked as peaceful, and no doubt the spirits of the dead were as quiet in heaven, as if no Sassenach had been here to disturb their slumbers. A good reason why old Thor did not disturb me. He is a heathen deity, and totally indifferent to any use whatever that churches may be put to. Perhaps, were I to go into one of his caves without reverently laying my shoes aside, and offering up my guide as a sacrifice, he might jump out of the crater of Hekla, and hit me a rap that would give my "daylights" their exit, or knock me where the sun never sets. I gave the farmer a dollar, for milk, cream, horse-pasture, and church-rent, and for the first time got a hearty Iceland salute. Throwing his arms round my neck he gave me a smack that fairly echoed from the surrounding hills.

From Skarth, the Eyjafjalla and Tindfjalla Jokulls show their broad, snowy sides and summits; but Hekla is the most conspicuous. The whole mountain, near to the top, is black. Near the summit there are some spots of snow that extend more or less down the north side, while a curling wreath of smoke on the apex reveals the existence of the fire within. We started directly towards the mountain, with the farmer for our guide.

On every side of Hekla, as far as we could see, much of the ground was covered with black lava. The land over which we rode here was covered with lava and volcanic sand, and, what is seldom seen in such a situation, tufts of grass grew here and there. Heath is nearly the first vegetation that finds root on the lava. Here in a pasture near a river, we saw a splendid lot of horses. What a wild, untamed look they had; sleek and fat, with long, flowing tails and manes! They appeared like the flock that crossed the path of Mazeppa. The Iceland farmers usually keep great numbers of horses, and there is no country in the world where they can be raised so cheaply. And they sell these animals cheap. I saw a beautiful jet black, four-years old, at the Geysers, an entire horse, that had never been saddled. His form was symmetry itself. He was just about twelve and a half hands high. I asked the price—less than ten dollars, our money. In Boston or New York he would bring 150 or 200 dollars. We crossed the Vestri Rangá, a small stream, and arrived about the middle of the afternoon at Nœfrholt, the last farm and the last green spot this side of Hekla. The farmer was from home; and our farmer from Skarth, who had accompanied us, started off after him. He had not got far before down he came, thrown by his horse, or rather falling off, for I could see nothing to bring him out of the saddle. Perhaps Mr. Cognac Brandy, or somebody else, had put a "brick" in his hat. He was a big, beefy fellow, and fell tumbling down like a meal sack. I thought he must be killed, and ran to help him; but he was up in a jiffy, and under full gallop in less than a minute, vaulting into his saddle on the off side. It takes an Icelander, to fall and not hurt him. I rather think this one would tumble down Mount Hekla and never bruise his shins. The farmer came home, and told us we could put up at his house; and then the Skarth farmer returned to his home. This was the first really pleasant evening I had seen during my journey, and it bid fair for a clear day on the morrow. Unless it were so, it would be useless to

attempt the ascent of Hekla, and expect to see any thing. I took the guide, and climbed to the top of a steep mountain, one of several about a thousand feet high that skirt the base of Hekla, and seemed to stand as sentries near their fiery and warlike monarch. Here the recollection of my boyish days and boyish sports came up, and I felt like having a little fun. There was a grand chance for rolling stones down hill, and we improved it. After setting off a number of different sizes, we noticed a ponderous boulder partly buried in the earth. It looked as if it could be moved. It was nearly round, and would weigh five or six tons. I called the guide to help me to push it off, but he looked ominously at the honse far on to the plain below. I convinced him that it could not go there; and then he showed me the farmer's wall, a beautiful dyke of stones and turf that separated the meadow below from the mountain pasture. I told him I would pay all damage. We got behind it, and with our backs to the mountain, and feet against it, we crowded it out of its bed. It fell with an awful crash through about a hundred feet of jagged rocks, nearly perpendicular, and then took the sloping plain below. But didn't it streak it? The ground fairly smoked. The surface was smooth sand and gravel, and within thirty or thirty-five degrees of the perpendicular. Lower down, the grass began to grow. The rock took a bee-line for two or three hundred yards, till near the bottom, when it commenced a series of flights of "ground and lofty tumbling" that would have done honour to Ducrow. One leap that I measured was thirty-four feet, and there it struck the farmer's wall. It walked through it as if it had been a cobweb, making a horrible gap near six feet wide, and moving one stone that would weigh at least a ton. Well, it was capital fun. The old rock curled round in a circuit, and rested in the meadow. The farmer and his family ran out of the house at the noise, and he came up to meet us. The guide got a furious blowing up, all of which he took very coolly. I ended the confab by paying him a dollar for the damage done, and he went

away quite satisfied. As I had had my dance, it was all fair that I should pay the fiddler.

The evening came on; as glorious a sunset as ever gilded the tops of Arctic mountains. I retired early, hoping in the morning to climb the rugged steep of Mount Hekla.

CHAPTER XI.

Thule, the period of cosmographie,
Doth vaunt of Hekla, whose snlphureons fire
Doth melt the frozen clime, and thaw the sky;
Trinacrian Ætna's flames ascend not hier;
These things seem wondrous.

OLD BALLAD.

HEIGHO for Hekla! Thursday, July 29, was a lofty one in my calendar. The sun had many hours the start of us, getting up as he does here at two o'clock in the morning. An early hour, though, found us in our saddles. The morning was magnificently bright, the mountain being visible, clear to the curling wreath of smoke on the summit. Little patches of snow, here and there near the top, made a break in the broad, black streams of lava that covered every part of the mountain. We provided ourselves with every requisite for a long day's journey. My knapsack was well stored with good things—solids and fluids; and then I had my old Scotch companion, the tartan plaid, to keep the cold away; and each of us had a fine staff—what the Swiss travellers call an Alpen stock, but ours were Hekla stocks, Iceland staffs—some six feet long, and armed with a strong, sharp, iron pike. My travelling guide, the farmer of Nœfrholt, and the reader's most humble servant, made up the party—not quite a princely retinue, but enough. Yes, and there was our dog, Nero. The top of the mountain was distant about seven miles, of which we could ride nearly four. Away we galloped through some fine green meadows, till we came to a mountain gorge on our right, down which in numerous cascades poured a

small river. Several ducks and water-hens flew away as we approached their mountain home. Passing through this gorge, we came into a circular meadow entirely shut in by mountains, like an immense amphitheatre, and this was the last bit of productive land on our way towards the summit of Hekla. A hut was erected here, as a temporary residence for the farmer while gathering his hay. High, precipitous hills of red lava overhung our path on the right, but the ascent for some distance was gradual. For near a mile, we galloped our horses over a gently ascending plain of fine volcanic sand. High up the mountain side were several sheep, but scarce a blade of grass could be seen where they stood. Perhaps they went up to enjoy the prospect of the green meadows far in the distance. We soon found our mountain climbing was not going to be play. Our ponies found it so too. Our route was intercepted by a broad and high stream of lava that extended six or seven miles from the summit of the mountain. We turned to the right in a sontherly direction, and for four or five hundred yards found it about as steep as our ponies could climb. We took a zigzag course to relieve the animals, and after half an hour's climbing found ourselves on a level table-land, nearly half a mile across. We were now about a thousand feet above the lower region, where we left the farm house; and here we were obliged to leave our horses. The Icelanders have an ingenious way of fastening their animals so that they cannot stray away. They fasten all their horses in a circle, tying the head of one to the tail of another, and bringing the head of the first round to the tail of the last. If they choose to travel, they can; but like John on his rocking-horse, they may gallop all day in one interminable circle, and not get far. Near where we left the horses, extending away to our right, was a large stream of lava—one that came from the eruption of 1845; and though seven years had elapsed, it was not yet cool, and smoke was rising from it in many places. The "streams of lava" that run from the craters of volcanoes, and which here in

Iceland are seen on the plains as well as on the mountains, are usually from twenty to forty feet deep, from a hundred yards to half a mile in hreadth, and from one to ten miles long. They are vast ridges of rough, black rocks, of a most forbidding aspect, the largest masses weighing from one to three or four tons. When it flows from the mountain, it is a stream of molten mineral, and its progress generally rather slow, hut dependent on the steepness of the mountain, and the size and the force of the stream. Melted lava often does not move more than from fifty to one hundred yards in a day, hut in some cases it may run several miles. It soon hegins to explode and break up, by the expansion and escape of the air within it, and by the force of the steam created by moisture on the surface of the ground heneath. While the lava is breaking up, for several days it keeps up a terrible roaring. Then this rough mass, as hlack as charcoal, lies unchanged in appearance for centuries. After a long time, it begins to turn a little brown, and on its surface appears in minute particles one of the lowest order of mosses.

The learned Spallanzani, Brydone, Dr. Holland, and others who have investigated the subject, have all agreed that there are no data on which a rule can be established, or a judgment formed, as to the age of the lava. It is light and porous, usually not more than half the specific gravity of granite. Pumice, among other volcanic suhstances, is lighter than water, and will float. Very old lavas arc often of a hright red colour, and soft and light, having something of the consistency of chalk. Much of the matter thrown out of a volcano, at certain periods of the eruption, is in the form of fine, black sand. We amused ourselves by rolling some masses of old lava down a steep declivity into a valley. It was very red, and so rotten that it broke into innumerable pieces. Leaving our horses, we commencod the ascent. While crossing a rough stream of lava, a mass, weighing one or two tons, rolled as I stepped on it, and threw me down, and I had a narrow escape from a severe accident. I got off with

a bruised shin, certainly not so unpleasant a companion as a broken bone would be, especially in a region like this, where there is not a skilful surgeon within a thousand miles. Our ascent led up a valley, having on our left the stream of lava aforesaid, and on our right and before us a hill of volcanic sand. Into this our feet sank deeply at every step. Half an hour brought us to the steep front of the mountain, and now commenced the ascent in real earnest. There was no bilking it; climb we must. Up, up we went, like crows scaling Ben Nevis. How the guides travelled so easy I could not tell. They had a heavy knapsack and bottles of water and bottles of milk, and I had nothing; but they tripped lightly along under their burdens, while I found it hard work. At first I could go ten or fifteen minutes without resting; but after an hour or so I had to stop every five or six yards, throw myself on the ground and recruit. Though nearly "tired to death," as boys say, yet in an astonishingly short space of time the fatigue would vanish. Here the surface was volcanic sand—beaten hard by the wind, apparently—and a good road to travel on. There were fragments of lava—"slag" and "scoriæ" —scattered over the ground. Some of these I started down the mountain, but they were so rotten that they broke into pieces before rolling a hundred yards. We were getting between two and three thousand feet high, nearly half way up the mountain; and yet vegetation had not entirely ceased. Now and then, we could see a bit of grass, and sometimes a very small plant. One tiny, yellow flower, not bigger than a gold dollar, I gathered and put in my pocket-book; and it proved to be the last flower that I saw in going up. While stopping to rest, I found I had frequent recourse to a certain glass thing that I carried—*vulgo vocato*, a "pocket pistol"—but what it was charged with is nothing to nobody! After about two hours hard climbing, we arrived at the top of an eminence where I had hoped we should at least see the summit of the mountain, and that not far off; but we were yet a long distance from it; hills peeping o'er hills,

and one peak rising above another. The weather was beautiful; and, far to the west, we could see the rivers with their green valleys, and beyond them the snow-covered jokulls of the far north. To the south we could see the Atlantic, though more than thirty miles distant. But we must climb, and up, up we go. I noticed here and there, among the dark-coloured lava and sand, a white-looking boulder, bearing evident marks of fire; some the size of a cannon-shot, and some that would weigh nearly half a ton. They were not granite, neither were they chalk; but I could not break them or carry away a specimen; so I had to be content with knowing they were not ordinary lava, but still something that must have been thrown out of the volcano. Our ascent grew less precipitous, and we veered to the left, not going directly towards the summit. At the height of about 4,000 feet, we first struck the snow. This was the first snow I had trod since arriving in Iceland; and, as if the whole order of nature must be reversed here, this snow was black. This was not exactly the natural colour, but a complexion it had assumed from being so near the mouth of the volcano. Sand, ashes, dust, and smoke, had coated and begrimed it so thoroughly that the whole surface was like fine charcoal. A long valley was filled with it. As near as I could judge, it was from five to fifty feet deep. We passed over several snow-banks that were many hundred yards in breadth, some of which had not lost their white colour. From the level country in the distance, these snow-banks looked like mere patches, but here we found some of them nearly a quarter of a mile across. We ascended the mountain from the west, but now we were north of the summit, and where most of the snow lay. Clouds now gathered round us, and we had to grope our way in the fog for some time. The ascent grew more precipitous, and the climbing was exceedingly toilsome. The earth and lava now appeared of a red colour. We seemed to be approaching the region of fire. Sulphurous fumes saluted our nostrils; the weather cleared a little, and, suddenly, before us

yawned a deep crater. What a horrible chasm! Indeed, it seemed like hell itself. Fire and brimstone literally. Dark, curling smoke, yellow sulphur, and red cinders, appearing on every side of it. The crater was funnel-shaped, about 150 feet deep, and about the same distance across at the top. This was one of four craters where the fire burst out in 1845. After the eruption, they had caved in, and remained as we now saw them. In a row above this one, extending towards the top of the mountain, were three other craters, all similar in appearance.

Our progress now was one of great danger. At our left was the north side of the mountain; and for a long distance it was a perpendicular wall, dropping off more than a thousand feet below us. A large stone thrown over, never sent back an echo. The craters were on our right, and between these and the precipice on our left we threaded a narrow ridge of sand, not wider than a common foot-path. A more awful scene, or a more dangerous place I hope never to be in. Had it not been for my long staff, I never could have proceeded. The dangers and terrors of the scene were greatly increased by the clouds and cold wind that came up on our left, and the smoke and sulphurous stench that rose from the craters on our right. One moment we were in danger of falling over the perpendicular side of the mountain on the one hand, and the next of being swallowed up in the burning crater on the other. Our path was exceedingly steep, and for nearly a quarter of a mile we pursued it with slow and cautious steps. Old Nero saw the danger, and set up a dismal howl. A few moments after, he slipped, and was near falling into the fiery pit. In five minutes, an animal or a man would have been baked to a cinder. Pursuing our way by the four craters, our path widened, and half an hour more brought us to the top of the mountain. Our purpose was accomplished; we stood on the summit of Mount Hekla. A toilsome journey it had been for us. I threw myself on the ground, and took a look at the scene before me. The top of the mountain was not

a peak, but broad and nearly flat, with here and there a little irregularity of surface. It was about a quarter of a mile across in one direction—from west to east—and some fifty rods the other way. In several places were deep snow-banks, but as yet we saw no crater on the summit.

It was now two o'clock, it having taken us about eight hours to make the ascent. Though we saw no crater, we had very direct evidence that we were in close proximity to volcanic fires. Little eminences of lava stood up around us, from which smoke issued; and the ground under our feet felt warm. On removing the earth to the depth of two or three inches it felt hot; and on digging down any where to the depth of six inches, smoke would burst out. Six inches deeper, and no doubt a man might light a segar. I went close to a bank of snow—to have something to cool my punch—spread out my tartan plaid on a warm piece of lava, opened my knapsack, sat down and dined. That was the loftiest dinner I had ever partaken. I had nearly a bottle of claret left, and a small drop of something stronger. The guides had a bottle of milk, the snow did the cooling, and I made a capital lot of milk punch. I drank several toasts; gave "the good health of all creation," toasted "the girl I left behind me," and "a health to all good fellows." Yes, and I thought, too, of my friends far, far away; and the distance I had travelled, and must travel again before I could see them. In that half hour—in that dinner on Hekla's smoking summit, I seemed to enjoy a sociality in the thought of friends and home, that I would not suppose a communion with one's thoughts in solitude would bring. *Nero* lay at my feet, the guides were conversing at a little distance, the lava around me was warm; and after a little time the weather cleared up, and left a blue sky and clear atmosphere, with a full opportunity to survey the wondrous panorama of nature that lay spread out below and around us.

A little way to the east was a slight elevation. To this I directed my steps. Here I stood on the highest summit of

Mount Hekla. A more magnificent prospect was never seen. Iceland was spread below and around me like a map. We were more than six thousand feet above the level of the sea, and higher than the tops of nearly every mountain in Iceland. To the west and north-west were vast green tracts of meadow land, checkered with hills and surrounded by mountains. White shining rivers intersected the valleys and plains like long silver ribbons. Far in the north, and to the northeast, were the snowy mountains, not in peaks, but stretching away in immense plains of brilliant white, and glistening in the sunshine.

In a valley, some twenty miles to the north-west, was a beautiful cluster of lakes, the water often of a deep, green colour, as they reflected the meadows on their banks. Now and then in the landscape would appear the Iceland "forest," like patches of shrubbery of a dark green hue. Some hills and old lava districts were covered with heath, now in full bloom, and clothing the land in a robe of purple. The surface of Hekla itself, and the ground on every side, some distance from the base, was one black mass of lava. To the northwest, and near at hand, rising abruptly from the plain to the height of 2500 feet, was *Bjolfell*, a bold and singular-looking mountain. A dark cloud lay in the south-east, intercepting the view, but on every other side the sky was clear and the prospect uninterrupted. To the south, far out to sea—distant about forty miles—were the Westmann Islands, rising abruptly out of the water to the height of more than 2,000 feet, and showing their basaltic cliffs in a clearly-defined outline. Cities, villages, and human habitations, filled no part of the landscape. The magical purity of the atmosphere, and the singular character of this volcanic country, make a view from the top of Mount Hekla one of the most extensive and varied of any on the earth's surface.* The view from this moun-

* Since the above was written, the writer has ascended Ætna in Sicily, and Vesuvius in Italy. Though these countries are far richer in natural productions, and abound in towns and cities, and the bay of Naples is proverbial for its beauty, yet

tain must extend more than 200 miles, showing a visible horizon of at least 1500 miles in circuit. Most fortunately the day was beautifully clear; and, after the first half hour on the summit—except a bank of clouds in the east—the whole country was visible. To the northeast, seemingly quite below us, in the valley of the river Tungná, was a landscape of tiny streams, little lakes, green meadows, and heath-clad hills. One small lake—the Grœnavatn (*green lake*)—was shaped like the moon when nearly full, and looked scarcely larger than a saucer. The mountains to the south, the lofty Tindfjalla and Eyjafjalla Jokulls, rose up in separate knobs or peaks, the latter justifying its name of "mountain of islands."

I thought I never should tire of contemplating the varied scene around me.

> "Though sluggards deem it but a foolish chase,
> And marvel men should quit their easy chair,
> The toilsome way, and long, long league to trace,
> Oh! there is sweetness in the monntain air,
> And life that bloated ease can never hope to share."

Time sped too quickly. The day was fast wearing away, and much yet remained to be seen on the mountain top. As yet, I had observed no crater on the summit; but going to the top of a little elevation, about one hundred yards from my dining table, it yawncd before me. This was the principal crater of the mountain, and larger than all the four that we had seen on our way up. It was of very irregular form, nearly a quarter of a mile in extent one way—a long chasm some two or three hundred feet deep—and not over one hundred yards wide. Some parts of the sides were perpendicular, and smoke was coming out of fissures and crevices in many places. There were several deep snow-banks in it; and though the entrance to a region of per-

he must say that the view from Mount Hekla is far more varied and beautiful, on account of the clearness of the atmosphere, and the variety of the mountain, valley, and island scenery.

petual "fire and brimstone," yet there has been no eruption from this crater for ages. We rolled some stones down the steep side of the crater, that crashed and thundered to the bottom, and were lost in a vast cloud of smoke. The guides now did nothing without urging; but I was determined, if possible, to go down into the crater. We went to the east end of it, where the descent was most gradual, and on a steep bank of snow, by a process well known to boys as "sliding down hill," we soon found ourselves at the bottom. Rather a risky place, inside of Hekla's burning crater; but if the lava and smoke proved too warm friends, we could cool off by jumping into a snow-bank.

We went through every part of this wonderful pit, now holding our hands in a stream of warm smoke, and again clambering over rocks, and standing under arches of snow. The ground under our feet was principally moist earth; the sides of the crater, rock-lava, and in many places loose slags and scoriæ. One most remarkable basaltic rock lay near the centre of the crater. It was spherical, nearly as round as a cannon-ball, and about twenty or twenty-five feet in diameter. It lay, apparently, entirely on the surface of the ground; and though of compact and solid structure, there were small cracks all over it, from the twentieth of an inch to a quarter of an inch across. Out of these cracks on every side of the rock, smoke and hot steam constantly issued. The ground all round it was moist earth and volcanic sand, and showed few signs of heat. Not ten feet from this rock was an abrupt bank of snow, at least twenty feet deep. In one place under it was a crevice in the lava, where the heat came out; and it had melted away the snow, forming a beautiful arch some ten feet high. We walked under it, and found streams of clear water running from the snow. At these pure fountains we filled some of our empty bottles. For the benefit of any future travellers here, I will mention, that had it not been for my own curiosity and perseverance, I never should have gone into this crater, or even have seen it at all. My mountain guide, the farmer of

Nœfrholt, seemed to think his duty performed after we were once on the top of the mountain. I hunted up the crater, quite out of sight from where we arrived on the broad summit of the mountain, wént to the brink, and then insisted on descending into it. After getting down to the bottom of the crater, a way selected entirely by myself, he very coolly informed me that he had a short time before gone down into it with some Danish gentlemen. After I had satisfied my curiosity in varied explorations, the guide proposed a place for our exit on the west, but where I am sure, had we attempted an ascent, we should have broken our necks. As we could not well slide up the hill where we had slidden down, I proposed an egress just to the north of our enormous smoking boulder; and it was so terribly steep that I thought we should inevitably tumble back into the crater after we were nearly to the top. "*Festus*," while travelling with Lucifer, says,

> "Let us ascend, but not through the charred throat
> Of an extinct volcano."

Not so with us: we did come straight out of such a "charred throat." We emerged from our warm pit, directly on the north edge of the mountain, where it fell off a vast distance in one perpendicular crag. There's a kind of fearful pleasure in gazing from a mountain's craggy summit.

> "And there's a courage which grows out of fear,
> Perhaps of all most desperate, which will dare
> The worst to know it:—when the mountains rear
> Their peaks beneath your human foot, and there
> You look down o'er the precipice, and drear
> The gulf of rock yawns—you can't gaze a minute,
> Without an awful wish to plunge within it."

The little green lake lay in its nest like a drop of water, some ten miles away, and the majestic Bjolfell reared its black form in solemn state nearly half as high as Hekla itself. We walked clear round the crater, and came to a deep, broad crack in the lava, that we had to leap across, and then returned to the place of our ascent, crossing a broad field of snow.

This snow was many years old, and from five to thirty or forty feet deep; and in several places heat came from the mountain, and melted it out in a great hole—the shape of an inverted pot-ash-kettle. I thrust my pike into the snow; and on withdrawing it, it showed that deep blue tint which I had supposed was only seen in new snow. Having gathered samples of all the lavas that I had seen, and loaded the guides with them, we prepared to descend. Our last six hours of the upward journey, in going back, was performed in two hours. Perhaps the loads of lava that the guides carried, increased their speed, urging them along in their down-hill course. The narrow pathway between the craters and the north brink of the mountain, we found far less dangerous on returning, as the weather was clear and the wind had gone down. When we came to the steep, sandy side of the mountain, it would be safe to believe that we went down pretty fast. Perhaps we didn't run exactly, but it was a specimen of rather "tall" walking. About half-way down, I drank the last drop of ———, the contents of my pocket-flask. "Farewell, thou lingering sweetness!" Our horses—condemned to fast or eat lava—had gone round a few circles, circumnavigating one another by chasing their tails; but they had not journeyed far. Leading them from the table-land down the steep acclivity, we mounted: their hunger gave them speed; and after a sharp gallop, we arrived at the farm-house about ten o'clock, a little before sunset, having escaped the dangers, and enjoyed the novelty of the loftiest journeying I had spent in all my travels.

CHAPTER XII.

——Fire that art slumbering there,
Like some stern warrior in his rocky fort,
After the vast invasion of the world!
Hast not some flaming imp or messenger
Of empyrean element, to whom
In virtue of his nature are both known
The secrets of the burning, central void below,
And yon bright heaven, out of whose aëry fire
Are wrought the forms of angels and the thrones?

FESTUS.

VOLCANIC eruptions in Iceland have presented some remarkable features. There are volcanoes that are much higher than any in this country; but, in the amount of lava thrown out at one time, no eruption on record ever equalled that of Skaptar Jokull in 1783. A notice of this may not be considered out of place. In May, about a month before this eruption, a volcano rose up from the bottom of the sea, above seventy miles from land, to the southwest of Cape Reykianes, and more than a hundred and fifty miles from Skaptar Jokull. This was one of the most remarkable submarine eruptions ever recorded. It formed a large island, and ejected vast quantities of pumice, a light, volcanic substance that floated on the surface of the water. It covered the sea for more than a hundred and fifty miles, and in such immense quantities that ships were detained in their progress while sailing along the coast. The sea-birds paused and screamed in their wheeling flight, and the more adventurous took a ride on a new volcanic raft. His Danish Majesty, on hearing of a creation of new territory near his ancient possession of Ice-

land, sent a ship with orders for its immediate annexation. The commander took formal possession of it in the name of the king. But the end was not yet. The flag of Denmark had not waved above it for a twelvemonth, before it sunk back into the ocean and disappeared for ever. Soon after this eruption in the sea—from the first to the eighth of June—violent earthquakes were experienced in the vicinity of Skaptar Jokull, and clouds of smoke obscured the sun for some days. It was often so dark in the middle of the day, that a sheet of white paper could not be seen when held up before the eyes. An immense shower of ashes, sand, and sulphur, filled the air, and completely covered the land. It poisoned the vegetation, destroying every green thing where it fell. Fortunately the wind carried it to the south, and it soon reached the ocean. Incredible as it may seem, this shower of ashes and sulphur was borne over the Northern Sea to the Faroe Isles, Shetland and Orkney, entirely over Great Britain, across to Holland, and far on to the continent of Europe, nearly two thousand miles from the place where it started. Around the mountain for many miles, darting flames and lightning filled the air, and the sulphur flashed and burned far up into the heavens. The next effect produced, was the heat of the volcano melting the ice that had shrouded it for centuries; and this caused such a deluge, that the rivers, particularly the Skaptá, overflowed their banks, and submerged, washed up, and even carried away farms. On the 10th of June, ten days after the first symptoms of an eruption appeared, the torrent of lava burst forth and poured down the side of the mountain. This followed so quickly after the flood of water, that in less than twenty-four hours the river was entirely dried up, and people walked across its bed, where, for years, it had only been passable in boats. While the fire was contending with the water, a terrible and deafening sound was heard, and immense quantities of steam filled the air. The fiery torrent poured down the bed of the river, often from four hundred to six hundred feet deep, and above two hun-

dred in breadth. Lightning flashed through the heavens, thunder and concussions of the earth were constantly heard and felt, and the volcano kept up a continued and terrible roaring. In its course down the bed of the river, the lava came to an immense chasm or pit, into which for many hours it poured with a deafening noise. The stream of lava flowed first south, then east, destroying farms, houses, and churches, and burning up the thickets of wood near Kirkubœr. Often great chasms in the earth would get filled with the melted lava, and then, as it cooled on top, the heat below would cause it to explode, and blow large masses of it high in the air. For three months the lava continued to flow, but it was not until the next February that the mountain ceased throwing out ashes, sand, flames, and hot stones. The effects of this eruption were more terrible than any thing of the kind that ever happened in Iceland. The showers of ashes, sand, and sulphur, completely destroyed every green thing for a long distance. Another most singular effect of this eruption, extended to the ocean. The fish that had always frequented the coast, were entirely driven away, and never returned. A terrible famine ensued. Within two years, over 190,000 sheep, 28,000 horses, and 11,000 cattle, died of starvation. About 10,000 inhabitants—one-fifth of the entire population of the island—perished from want and exposure. The amount of lava ejected from this volcano was probably greater than that of any eruption of the same duration, ever recorded. It covered a tract of country 500 square miles in extent; and, had it lain of equal thickness over the entire surface, would have been over 300 feet deep. The lava would have filled the channels of fifty rivers as large as the Hudson from Albany to New York.

It is said that the personal appearance of a certain quadruped does not give an unfailing indication of the distance he can jump. This can scarcely be true of Skaptar Jokull. If size is an indication of power, the vast magnitude of this mountain would

seem to show that its eruptions would be terrible. It is over one hundred miles in diameter at the base, and more than three hundred and thirty in circumference. The most of it is wrapped in a pall of eternal snow, and centuries sometimes elapse without an eruption. Inaccessible, except in some places around the edges, it appears from different points of view like several distinct mountains; and in different parts it goes by different names. On the west, it is known as Skaptar Jokull; and on this side the great eruption occurred. On the south, it is called Oræfa Jokull; and at this point it is the highest mountain in Iceland, being over seven thousand feet above the level of the sea. Its vast central surface, and all throughout its northern boundary, is known as Vatna Jokull or Klofa Jokull, and is supposed to contain in its hollows large pools of standing water. This particular account I had given me in a conversation with Herre Biarni Gunnlaugson, the indefatigable Icelandic geographer, who travelled over every part of Iceland for a period of twelve years. During this time, he saw the entire country, and gathered the information and executed the drawings for his most elaborate and valuable map of the island. I can lay claim to some personal acquaintance with Skaptar Jokull. Standing on the summit of Hekla, I could look directly over nearly the entire surface of the mountain. It does not rise from all sides to one peak in the centre, like Ætna, Stromboli, Hekla, and Vesuvius; but to the eye it presents the appearance of one vast glittering plain of snow. The few travellers who have ascended the jokulls of Iceland, have described them as presenting immense cracks in the snow and ice; making their ascent more dangerous, in proportion to their height, than probably any other mountains in the world. The enormous bulk of Skaptar Jokull may be imagined from one comparison. Were it as steep and high, in proportion to its breadth of base, as the Peak of Teneriffe, its perpendicular height would be more than ten miles above the level of the sea. Next to this mountain and Hekla, the most

noted in Iceland are the Eyjafjalla and Tindfjalla Jokulls in the south, and Snæfell Jokull in the west.

As an instance of the effects of volcanic eruptions, and also of the inaccuracy of geographers respecting Iceland, one fact may be mentioned. On nearly every English or American map, where Iceland is represented, there will be noticed a large lake called the "Fiske Vatn," or *Fish Lake.* There is no such lake in existence, nor has there been for many years. There *was* such a lake long ago—I have not the date but think it was nearly a hundred years since; but a volcano rose up from the bottom, filled its entire bed, and literally drank it up at a draught! Now there is no vestige of a lake in the vicinity; but there is a mountain, and I saw it. It lies between Hekla and Skaptar Jokull, and goes by the name of FISKIVATNAVEGR, or "Fish-lake-mountain." Nature works by general laws, but this particular sample of its work seems to us rather singular. Now, this is a geographical and historical fact, and poetry can be quoted to prove things that are quite as strange. *Festus,* in describing his tour in "Giant-land," related some of the customs of the inhabitants, and told how they lived:—

——"A wheat-stack, here, would hut make
One loaf of bread for them. Oak-trees they use
As pickles, and tall pines as toothpicks; whales,
In their own bluhber fried, serve as mere fish
To bait their appetites. Boil'd elephants,
Rhinoceroses, and roasted crocodiles—
Every thing dish'd up whole—with lions stew'd,
Shark sauce, and eagle pie, and young giraffes,
Make up a pot-luck dinner—if there's plenty.

STUDENT.—And as to beverage?

FESTUS. Oh! if thirsty, they
Will lay them down and drink a river dry,
Nor once draw breath.
* * * *
* * When death takes place,
They burn the bodies always in a lake,
The spray whereof is ashes, and its depths
Unfathomable fire."

Now, either of these can be taken to prove the other. The poetry is consistent, for it agrees, in all essential particulars, with the natural phenomena in this case.

Mount Hekla has a greater celebrity than any other mountain in Iceland, owing to the frequency of its eruptions. All of these, for eight hundred and fifty years, are said to be recorded, and amount to twenty-four in number. They have averaged about three in a century; and, though occurring at irregular intervals, at no time have more than seventy-seven years elapsed from one eruption to another. The following are the periods of

THE ERUPTIONS OF MOUNT HEKLA SINCE THE YEAR 1000.

	A.D.	INTERVAL BETWEEN THE ERUPTIONS. Years.
1	1004	—
2	1029	25
3	1105	76
4	1113	8
5	1157	44
6	1206	49
7	1222	16
8	1294	72
9	1300	6
10	1340	40
11	1374	34
12	1390	16
13	1436	46
14	1510	74
15	1554	44
16	1583	29
17	1619	36
18	1625	6
19	1636	11
20	1693	57
21	1728	35
22	1754	26
23	1766–68	12
24	1845, 46	77

According to the Icelandic records, the surface of the land in the vicinity of Mount Hekla has been entirely changed by the eruptions. Formerly, there were beautiful farms on every side, and the country was thickly settled close up to the base of the mountain. The successive eruptions or inundations of lava have covered the land for many miles around, with a charred and blackened mass.

The Icelanders are much more devoted to history and poetry than to exact science; and on this account the various eruptions of their volcanoes, and other remarkable natural phenomena, have received much less attention, and been recorded with far less accuracy and minuteness, than historical events. Owing to this, we have not as many records of their volcanoes, spouting springs, and submarine eruptions, as would be desirable. Had we a more extended series of facts, much that now seems irregular and mysterious, could be reduced to system.

CHAPTER XIII.

I've traversed many a mountain strand,
Abroad and in my native land,
And it hath been my lot to tread,
Where safety more than pleasure led;
Thus many a waste I've wander'd o'er,
Clomb many a crag, cross'd many a moor;
But, by my halidome,
A scene so rude, so wild as this,
It ne'er hath been my lot to pass,
Where'er I happ'd to roam.

SCOTT.

AFTER our sojourn of two days in explorations of Mount Hekla, we took leave of the farmer of Nœfrholt and his family, and travelled towards the southwest coast, the Reykir Springs, and the Sulphur Mountains. There are some pleasing and original customs among the Icelanders; and with these are their ways of saluting, at meeting and parting. Young and old, male and female, have the same affectionate greeting and parting compliments. They first shake hands, then embrace with arms about each other's necks, and then bring their lips in close contact. I have sometimes fancied, when they took their faces apart, that I could hear a slight *clicking* sound; but this might have been imagination. When I have been kindly entertained at a house, and especially if there have been one or two pretty girls in the family, I have at parting adopted the same kind of salute. Some of these compliments came off at the base of Mount Hekla on the morning of July 30. This day I had a charming ride. Our road for some distance lay through a

wood, and I have before spoken of the stately grandeur of an Iceland forest. In addition to the usual birch and willow trees, some of which were a little higher than our horses' backs, there were many bearing a small berry—the "blue berry" they called it; and this is the only thing of the fruit kind in all Iceland. They are eaten by the natives, usually with milk or cream, and wherever they are found are highly prized. I have tasted them, but they seem almost destitute of flavour. It takes a hot sun to give flavour to fruit, and old Sol does not give much of his caloric to this country. What would these northern people think of a luscious peach, just as it is picked from a tree in New Jersey? One species of rose is found in Iceland—the *Rosa Hibernica;* and I suppose they (the roses) hardly know the difference between Iceland and Ireland. I have frequently observed these rose bushes here, but I have never yet seen them in flower. A rose in Iceland would be a sight. You might as well expect to see

"Roses in December, ice in June."

Here, too, we found that most beautiful of all the shrubs and flowers of Iceland, the fragrant heath. It is very plentiful, and of the same species so common in the Highlands of Scotland. Here it is of small size, seldom more than a foot in height. It is one of the first vegetables found growing on the lava beds. It seems to grow on a medium soil between the naked barren lava and the fertile meadows. Nearly one half of Iceland is covered with heath, and some day it may be fertile enough to produce grass. I have been told more than once that this beautiful shrub will not grow in North America, but I cannot believe it. In Europe and the Northern Isles, and Africa and Madeira, there are more than a hundred different varieties of heath. Why will not some horticulturists rear a good variety, and try them from various climes, Madeira, Scotland, and Iceland, and get some of them naturalized with us in America, that they might cover our barren hills and waysides, and adorn our gardens and fields?

The heath and the ivy—two plants almost unknown in America —are more beautiful, and do more in Great Britain to cover up and adorn barren hills and old walls and ruins than all other vegetation, and yet they are rarely seen with us. I have been told, however, that the late lamented Mr. Downing has planted and naturalized the beautiful evergreen ivy, obtaining it from England. Let gardeners and farmers blush or boast, neither nature nor cultivation has adorned our hills with one nor ten plants that look half so beautiful as the blooming heather that covers the hills of far-off northern Iceland. The same species that grows here, I have seen in the Orkney and Shetland Islands, the Hebrides, the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland, England, Ireland, France, Germany, Holstein, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. It also grows in Africa, as far south as the Cape of Good Hope, the Cape heaths forming the most beautiful varieties of floral contributions that are seen at the splendid Chiswick flower-shows in London. Wilkes, in his *Exploring Expedition*, describes and pictures the forests of heath in Madeira, the trees nearly or quite a foot in diameter, and forty or fifty feet in height. I have an idea of offering a prize for the most beautiful variety of heath that will flourish in the open air in our Northern States, and then I think I will import some Iceland heath, and carry off the reward myself! Perhaps some of our horticultural societies will take the hint, go to work, and get it all done before I get back to America. Leaving Nœfrholt, we took our back track as far as Skarth, where I had stayed all night and slept in the church a few days before. The farmer seemed glad to see me, gave me a "grip of his flipper," and a fine bowl of milk. I returned the grip, gave him a piece of silver, mounted my horse, and off we galloped to the south-west. If the world was not "all before us where to choose," all Iceland was, and on we journeyed. Some hours' travel brought us to the banks of the Thiorsá, and we prepared to face its turbulent and mighty current. Any one who supposes that that little white spot in

the Arctic sea, called Iceland, cannot produce a river worthy of the name, had better try to swim across this one. I should far rather breast the Hellespont, and follow Leander. Larger than the Hudson at Newburgh, swift as an arrow, white with clay from the mountains, and cold as ice,—really it is the most formidable stream in appearance that I have ever seen. But we had ferried it once, and could again; and a frail skiff put off from the opposite shore to take us across. The only ferryman was a small boy, and so I manned one oar myself. The guide sat in the stern of the boat, and led the horses as they swam after us. The boy could not row evenly with me; the current bore us furiously down the stream; the boat leaked badly; and, by the time we were in the middle of the river, the horses got unmanageable, nearly upset our frail craft, and finally broke loose altogether, and floated and swam down the stream, the tips of their noses and their ears just out of water. We let the horses go, and rowed like good fellows, and landed on the west side of the river, but a good long way farther down than the point opposite where we started. The poor ponies followed the boat as well as they could, and after a while all came ashore, some in one place and some in another. We now travelled directly down the Thiorsá, towards the south coast, bordering the Atlantic. We had a fine journey through the valley of this great river. There was no crossing except at the ferries; but the fine farming region, and a wish to get a near view of the Westmann Islands, and, if possible, visit them, induced me to make a long and circuitous journey on the southern coast. The weather was clear and fine, and Hekla and the Eyjafjalla and Tindjfalla Jokulls stood up in bold relief against the eastern sky. The Eyjafjalla Jokull, as its name imports—Mountain of Islands—shows, on its broad, sloping summit, several knobs that stand up like islands. Near the top, where it inclines towards the west, I could see a broad, deep chasm, filled with snow. This pit must be of immense depth, for while it is nearl filled with snow, it is

plainly visible for more than thirty miles. On the more even summit of the Tindfjalla Jokull, there are several little elevations like islands or miniature mountains. Hekla looks black, clear to the summit, except now and then a small spot of snow. I do not know where those writers get their information from, regarding this mountain, when they speak of the "three-coned Hekla." From different points of the compass, including nearly every position whence Hekla can be seen, and also from a sojourn on its summit, I must say that I have never seen three cones, nor even two. From all sides, the highest point rises in one single cone, like the profiles of most other volcanoes. On arriving at the top, it is rather broad and flat, as I have mentioned; but this is not observed from a distance. It is steeper than Ætna, but not so steep as Vesuvius. That Madam Pfeiffer should speak of Hekla as having three cones, and *no crater at all*, is exactly in accordance with most of her statements about Iceland.

The valleys of the Hvitá the Thiorsá, and the Markarfliot, south, south-west, and west of Hekla, comprise the largest tract of grass land in all Iceland. A large share of it is in cultivated farms, and the rest is bog. In drawing near to the coast, how magnificent the Westmann Islands appear! Rising up like columns, they stand from one to two thousand feet above the ocean. Formed of perpendicular basaltic rocks, these and other islands of the north of Europe rank with the most splendid coast-scenery in the world. The Westmann Islands are most difficult to approach. The place of landing is so treacherous, that unless the weather is calm and the sea very still, a landing cannot be effected. A high cascade on the mainland of Iceland, near the town of Holt, is a sort of weatherometer that decides whether a boat can put off with a prospect of gaining the island. This cascade is one long stream of spray, formed by a small brook falling a height of 800 feet. In windy weather the spray is blown entirely away, so that from the landing no cascade is

in sight. If it is still enough for this cascade to appear constantly two days in succession, then the sea is usually calm enough to allow boats to land, and they venture out. In the winter, it sometimes happens that for weeks no boats can pass between the islands and the main shore.

The Westmann Islands—Icelandic, *Vestmannaeyjar*—were settled by a colony of Irish slaves in 875, one year after the first settlement of Iceland. A Norwegian pirate cruising in the Atlantic, came upon the coast of Ireland, landed, and captured forty or fifty persons, men, women, and children, and carried them off as slaves. Before he got home, they rose on their captors, slew them, and went ashore at the first land they met. This was on the largest of the Westmann Islands; that name being given them by the Icelanders, as these people came from the west. Christianity came here with these Irish people; and to this day, crosses, crosiers, and other articles of a like nature are dug up on the island, and were undoubtedly carried here by the first settlers. The islands are fourteen in number; but only four of them produce any vegetation or pasturage, and of these only one is inhabited. This is very appropriately called Heimaey or Home Island. It is fifteen miles from the coast, and forty-five from Hekla. On this island is a harbour, partly encircled by a high perpendicular rock. Here they land and embark in boats. A precipitous path leads to the top of the island, where the people, with their habitations, a few sheep, and their little church, remain two thousand feet above the ocean. The islands are basaltic, like Fingal's Cave and the Giant's Causeway; but, instead of being one or two hundred feet in height, rise like immense columns, nearly half a mile above the sea. The inhabitants draw their entire subsistence from the ocean and the cliffs, catching codfish and killing seabirds, myriads of which haunt the rocks of their seagirt shores. The seafowl furnish large quantities of feathers. Some of the birds are used for food, and some for fuel. They split them open, dry them, and then

burn them, feathers and all. From the accounts given of this novel sort of firewood, the odour rising from it must be "most tolerable, and not to be endured!" The birds most used for food are young puffins—the *Fratercula arctica*—a rather small seabird, with a bill shaped like a short, thick plough-coulter. In England and Scotland, they are called the coulter-neb puffin. This beak is a most wonderful one, large to deformity—nearly as bulky as all the rest of the bird's head. There are several circular marks entirely round it, making it look like a small barrel with the hoops on it. But do not these hardy islanders show skill and daring in the pursuit of birds and eggs for subsistence? Wonder how the Yankees would take the birds? Shoot them with rifles, I suppose, "knocking their day-lights out," one at a time. But these islanders do not take this slow method—not they. In the egg season they go to the top of the cliffs, and, putting a rope round a man's waist, let him down the side of the perpendicular rock, one, two, or three hundred feet; and on arriving at the long, narrow, horizontal shelves, he proceeds to fill a large bag with the brittle treasures deposited by the birds. Getting his bag full, he and his eggs are drawn to the top by his companions. If the rope breaks, or is cut off by the sharp corners of the rocks, the luckless duck-egging fowler is precipitated to the bottom, perhaps two thousand feet into the sea, or is dashed to pieces on the rocks below. Accidents happen but rarely, and here these hardy men glean a scanty subsistence. At a later period in the season, they go and get the young birds.

If the old birds object, they are ready for them, and serve them sailor fashion, knocking them down with a handspike. The old often fight desperately for their young, and will not give up till their necks are broken, or their brains knocked out with a club. Where the cliffs are not accessible from the top, they go round the bottom in boats, and show a wonderful agility and daring in climbing the most terrible precipices. They furnish nothing for export on these islands, except dried and

salted codfish and feathers. With these they procure their few necessaries and luxuries, consisting principally of clothing, tobacco and snuff, spirits, fish-hooks and lines, and salt. The habit of living entirely on fish and seafowl produces a disease among them, that carries off all their children before they are seven years of age. I am told that unless they are taken to the main shore to be brought up, not one single one would live through childhood. Some well-informed Icelanders have told me that the inhabitants of the Westmann Islands would live as well, and be as free from disease, as the natives of Iceland, were it not for their intemperance. Give a people few or no luxuries—bread and vegetables as food being almost unknown—and expose them to great fatigue, wet, cold, and danger; and would we not suppose ardent spirits would be acceptable? The inhabitants of the far-off St. Kilda, the most western of the Western Isles of Scotland, are said to lose all their children that are kept on the island, and from the same causes that occasion the mortality on the Westmann Islands. These islands form a separate Syssel or county, and they have a church, and usually two clergymen. Their church was rebuilt of stone, at the expense of the Danish government, in 1774, and is said to be one of the best in Iceland. It is supported by tithes, still raised here according to the Norwegian mode. Christianity was brought here with the first settlers from Ireland, and here it still remains; and I have sometimes wondered if, during the changes of a thousand years, any of the brogue of the Tipperary boys, or the lads of Connaught, could be discerned in their conversation. Probably it has all been frozen up, or exchanged for the more mellifluous tones of the followers of Odin and Thor.

Doubly secure as these inhabitants are, by their poverty and their almost inaccessible cliffs, one would suppose that they would be secure from any warlike or piratical depredations. Notwithstanding this, they have twice been attacked and pillaged by sea-rovers. As early as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,

piratical cruisers—many of them fitted out in the English and French ports—came north; and plunder, rapine, and murder desolated all the western and southern coasts of Iceland. One English pirate, named John, was noted for his success and daring. He was called "Gentleman John," being probably, like the Greek cruiser,

> ——— "the mildest manner'd man
> That ever scuttled ship, or cut a throat
> With all true breeding of a gentleman."

This courteous corsair came to the Westmann Islands in 1614, pillaged the church, and carried off their sacred relics. He probably knew the inhabitants were descendants of the Hibernians, and only showed the spirit of an Englishman towards the Irish. He also plundered their houses, and no doubt from the contents of their beds managed to feather his own nest considerably. He returned to Great Britain, but King James I. caught and punished him, and, with the true honesty of a Scotchman, returned their church ornaments. In 1627, a vessel of Turkish or Algerine pirates, after plundering several places on the eastern and southern coasts of Iceland, landed on the Westmann Islands. They murdered between forty and fifty of the inhabitants, plundered the church and set it on fire, robbed the houses, carried off all the food, clothing, and valuables, and then burnt their habitations. They took near four hundred men, women, and children prisoners, bound them in fetters, put them on board their vessel, and carried them in captivity to Algiers. There were two clergymen among them, one of whom, Jon Thorsteinson, was murdered at the time. He was the first translator of the Psalms of David into Icelandic verse. He also translated the Book of Genesis, and some other parts of the Bible, in a similar manner. He is spoken of in Icelandic history as the "martyr." The other clergyman, Olaf Egilson, with his wife and children, and the rest of the prisoners, were sold into slavery in Algiers.

Egilson got away two years after, and wrote an account of

their sufferings and privations, which was afterwards published in Danish. It was not until 1636, nine years after their capture, that the unfortunate Icelanders were released, and then only by being ransomed by the king of Denmark. Their treatment and sufferings can be imagined; only thirty-seven of the whole number survived, and of these but thirteen persons lived to regain their native island. Notwithstanding the sufferings, calamities, and hardships of the people, the Westmann Islands continue to be inhabited.

Since the earthquakes and great volcanic eruptions of 1783, the fish in the neighbourhood of the Westmann Islands, and all along the south coast of Iceland, have nearly all disappeared, so that the principal dependence of the inhabitants is on the sea-fowl. Besides the puffin, they use for food the fulmar—*Procellaria glacialis.* For their winter supply, they salt them very slightly, and pack them down in barrels. I wonder how one of these poor mortals, accustomed to so little variety, would relish such a dinner as they serve up at the London Tavern, the Astor, or the Revere House! Thor and Epicurus! He would probably surfeit himself, unless it so happened that he could relish none of their dishes, and refused to eat.

But my pony's head is turned towards the west, and I am probably as near the Westmann Islands as I ever shall be. The disappearing spray of the "Driving Cascade" shows a rough and stormy coast; so good-by to the contented islanders, their sea-girt cliffs, and their seabird food.

CHAPTER XIV.

——— A merrier man,
Within the limits of becoming mirth,
I never spent an hour's talk withal.

SHAKSPEARE.

My ride along the banks of the Thiorsá, before my detour to the south coast, near the Westmann Islands, was a pleasant one. The little green, turf-covered hillocks—not appearing much like houses, though they were so—gave an air of solitude to the landscape, that but few civilized countries possess. The air was vocal with birds, that constantly flew about us. The mournful note of the plover, and the wild scream of the curlew, were constantly heard, as they rested on the signal-cairns by the way-side, or flew away towards a thicket. These birds, as well as the ptarmigan, are very plentiful in Iceland, and are all reckoned as game-birds.

A man could travel through Iceland in the summer, carrying a gun, a few loaves of bread, some tea, coffee, and sugar, get plenty of milk and cream at the farmers' houses, and shoot game enough for his meat, without once leaving his horse. Some might not consider it a great luxury, after a hard day's ride, to sit down to a banquet of roasted raven, a fricasseed hawk, or a broiled seagull; but it would be quite as good as the buzzard soup that Prince Achille Murat used to get in Florida. Some nice ptarmigan or plover, with a piece of a loaf, tea or coffee, and butter, would make a feast that many a traveller would be glad to have. Then, too, in the interior are large herds of wild reindeer, where a good marksman could select a nice piece of

venison. Henderson, the missionary, saw a large flock, that approached quite near him before offering to retreat. White and blue foxes, seals, and sometimes an importation of white bears from Greenland, that not unfrequently float over on fields of ice, might afford a little sport, and perhaps profit, but would be rather tough eating. I, however, carried no arms, except the "pickers and stealers" that Dame Nature furnished me with; so I did not speak to the birds in the loud tones of villainous saltpetre. I have had my murderous propensities, nurtured when a lad by shooting crows and squirrels, the most excited here, in Iceland, by some old ravens, who seemed to me to act with a very unbecoming familiarity. These birds were sacred to Odin, and I believe the Icelanders never molest them. Odin had two, one for memory, and the other for news. They used to fly abroad during the day, and return at night, bringing intelligence from all parts of the world. One would perch on his right shoulder, and the other on his left, and relate to him every thing that was going on, at the same time refreshing his memory in regard to past events. The old Scandinavians never used to make a voyage, or go a journey, without them. Floki, a Norwegian pirate, one of the first settlers of Iceland, took three of them with him when he started on his voyage as pilots, to show him the way. After getting some distance beyond the Faroe Isles, he let off one, and he returned to Faroe. Sailing awhile longer, he sent off another; and, after a wide circuit in the air, he returned to the ship. Sailing some days more, he released the third; and he flew away to the north-west. Following him, he soon reached the coast of Iceland. There seems to be a pair of these birds living near almost every house in Iceland. I have never seen a church, with a house near by, where there was not a pair of ravens. They seem to be a much larger bird here, than any of the kind that I ever saw in America. At the little church and farm-house of Haukadalr, near the Geysers, were two; and they would often alight on the church,

and sometimes on a gate-post, but a few feet from me. One of them showed a great aversion to *Nero*, and would sometimes swoop down, and nearly hit the dog's head. Believing him to be nothing but a heathen, I had a most Christian wish to send a bullet through him. But my Colt's pistol was far away, and his black ravenship could worship Odin, Thor, or any other deity he pleased.

If these birds are not Christians, there is one excuse for them. They are very long-lived, and perhaps, having a distinct recollection that some of the buildings now used as places of worship, were built and used for worship during the days of idolatry and heathenism, they have been unconscious of the introduction of Christianity. The ravens here have the same costume as in other countries, dressing in the "inky cloak," and "customary suits of solemn black." Their language, too, always being uttered in slow and solemn tones, adds to their appearance of gravity and wisdom.

But as for the corbies, the corn-fed pirates! they never come here. A crow was never seen in Iceland. Here, there are no grain-fields to plunder, nor trees to build their nests in. Ill-bred rascals, living on bread-stuffs, were they to come here and ask for a loaf, they would get a stone.

In my journey to-day, I passed near Skalholt, situated in the forks of the Bruará and the Hvitá rivers. This place, dignified with the title of the "capital" of Iceland in most of the books of geography that I have seen, is simply a farm, and contains the ruins of one small cathedral church, where one of the bishops of Iceland used to officiate. It is now only interesting as a locality connected with the ecclesiastical history of the country. On the banks of the mighty Thiorsá, I travelled some distance. I find it difficult to leave this river. I like its roaring, turbulent torrent—to look at—wouldn't like to swim it though, unless I desired a much colder bath than I have been accustomed to. I believe it would be difficult to find a river

of the magnitude, or strength of current, of this, in an island that only contains 40,000 square miles. The Thiorsá is nearly a hundred and fifty miles long, falls over 3000 feet in less than sixty miles, and carries far more water to the ocean than the Hudson does.

We left the river near the church of Olafsvell, and bore away to the west, through meadows and farms, and one large tract of lava. On our left, for some distance, it was all lava; and on the right was a range of hills and mountains. Our prospective stopping-place for the night, was at the house of the sysselman of the district; and, a part of the day having been rainy, I did not care how soon we arrived there. The roads were tolerably good—that is, for Iceland—and custom had made a seat in the saddle for eight or ten hours in the day, a comparatively easy exercise.

But, ho! the sysselman's house appears in sight. Some large flocks of ptarmigan seemed to be tokens of good cheer and comfortable quarters. Riding up a long lane between fences, we arrived at the house, a fine framed building, and the only house I had seen for some time that appeared fit for the home of a Christian. Round it were out-buildings, and a large number of hay-stacks. The afternoon had cleared off finely; and the shining of the western sun, and the presence of a good many well-clad people and children—some piling up the fragrant hay—made one of the most pleasant and comfortable scenes that can be imagined.

We dismounted, and the guide went among the men, and first spoke to a clerical-looking personage, dressed in black. He next saw and talked with the sysselman, who was giving directions about gathering and stacking the hay. The guide returned to me, and I understood him to say the man in black was the parish clergyman. Still the sysselman did not come near me; but he was busy, and his tardiness was only the prelude to a most hearty welcome; for he finally came forward, and shook

me cordially by the hand, an operation he repeated several times while walking towards the house. He was a native Icelander, tall, well-dressed, and a man of intelligence. He spoke some English, and was, evidently, a right down, merry, hospitable good fellow. Opening the front door of his house, he ushered me into his parlour, a well-furnished room, having chairs, sofa, a fine carpet, and on the walls several pictures, looking-glasses, &c., &c.

Here I was in clover, for once. Visions of down-beds, a plastered and papered room, and capital cheer, crowded thick and fast upon me. The good cheer was not long coming, either —for wine, brandy, hot water, sugar, glasses, silver spoons, et cetera, and sugared cakes, soon covered the table. He spoke nearly every language under heaven, I have no doubt; but to me it seemed a mixture of Danish, English, Latin, Greek, Icelandic and French, with some broad patches, straight from Babel, that my learning couldn't exactly sort out. The priest too was present; and mine host characterised him as a finished scholar, and one who could talk excellent Latin. His lingo, though, was many removes from the language of Cicero and Horace. The sysselman poured out some brandy, and mixed a glass of punch; and so did I; and so did the preacher; and we sipped it. I had often heard of the Iceland sysselmen, and their hospitality to travellers; but this was my first experience of it, and it went clear up to the portrait my imagination had drawn.

We ate and drank; and he took me through his house, showed me his library, his sleeping-rooms, his handsome wife, and several rosy-cheeked, well-dressed children. He showed me an octavo volume, the journal of their Althing or Assembly; and I saw his name among the national legislators, where he had figured as a statesman. He took down from his library a life of Lord Byron, in Danish, with portraits, and extracts from

his works in English and translated, and, writing my name in it, gave it to me.*

Meantime, the liquor seemed to improve him. He gradually grew mellow; was first kind, then cordial, then sociable, then talkative, then argumentative, then jolly, then affectionate, then drunk—or at least rather "how come you so?" We walked out doors, and saw his people building haystacks. It was a beautiful approaching sunset. I ran and jumped on to a half-finished stack, to see how it was formed; but I came off again pretty quick, and found I had a small brick in my hat! No matter, however, considering the day's travel was over. The guide, though, didn't take the saddles off, and only opened one of the trunks to get a book I wished to show the sysselman. It seemed barely possible we were not to stay all night here, after all. In fact he hadn't asked me to stay. He would not have had to ask me but once. Our friend in the clerical garb became very merry too. He made signs of departure, but seemed waiting for me. Was it possible we were not to stay all night at the sysselman's? The guide had all day told me we should. But the fact began to stare me in the face; so did a very extensive bog meadow, directly to the west. But the sysselman didn't ask me to stay all night. I wished he had. But he didn't. And our horses were led to the door, and the saddles adjusted, and every thing got ready; and we mounted and rode off. The jolly, clerical-looking chap accompanied us; though he was no clergyman at all, but a drunken ferryman, who lived on a river a long way to the west. He was to be our guide over the interesting bogs, to some very nice caravansera, no doubt; but where it could be, I neither knew nor did I inquire. We left—we did—and I gave my kind entertainer a very affectionate and cordial good-night. He is a merry, hospitable,

* The presentation read thus: "Tie Herre Pliny Miles, Raburky, fra New York; erkjendtligst fra Th. Gudmundsen, Sysselmandi, Arnes Sysla, 30 Juli, 1852."

good fellow, I am sure; but I didn't repose under his eider-down.

Our ride was a cheering one—in a horn! And miles we travelled, and—and—and—wait till the next chapter, and we'll see what.

CHAPTER XV.

Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
When our deep plots do pall; and that should teach us
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.
Hamlet.

No, I did not stay at the sysselman's; but I had a ride of a couple of hours through a bog meadow, and arrived about sunset at Hraungerthi—*Islandsk*—"Garden of Lava." This, like many other towns that may be seen laid down on the map of Iceland, contains nothing but a farm and farm-house, the residence of a clergyman, and his church. The pastor owns the farm and pastures, and labours in his own vineyard, as well as in the vineyard of the Lord. During the week he looks after his flocks and herds; and on Sunday he gathers his own little flock of immortals together, and tells them of the green meadows and still waters that lie in the domain of the Good Shepherd, in that bright realm where winter never comes, and where earthquakes and volcanoes are heard not. The clergyman of this district is Herre Sigurthur Thorarensen, and I soon found I had lost nothing by leaving the sysselman's to come under his hospitable roof. He was not a *bon vivant* and a "jolly good fellow;" but he was a man of sense and learning, a Christian and a philosopher. He spoke Latin excellently; and his son, Stefan Thorarensen, could converse fluently in English, as well as in four or five other languages. I know not when I have enjoyed myself as pleasantly and profitably as in my visit at this hospitable mansion. I soon found that I had gained, not lost,

by coming here, and that, as in many other cases, what seems to be a misfortune or inconvenience, turns out for the best.

Mr. Thorarensen had a fine library of books in various languages, and a copy of the large and elegant map of Iceland that had been lately published. His house had excellent furniture, and he was every way as well lodged as his official neighbour, the sysselman. The church, a few steps from the house, was a neat wooden building; and in it were two monumental tablets —rather unusual in Iceland—one with an inscription in gilt letters to the memory of Mr. Thorarensen's late wife. Every thing in and about this church was in excellent order and good taste. Around the church were small, green mounds, where—

"The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep."

Not a "head-stone," a "piece of mouldering lath," or single mark or inscription was seen. Nothing but the little grass-grown mounds erected over the dead in one of their churchyards. How simple such a mode of burial! Shall any of these be forgotten at the sound of the last trump? Would a "storied urn or animated bust" give them a surer passport to heaven, or make the sleepers sleep more soundly? Would a lying epitaph cheat the Great Jehovah, or be admissible testimony at heaven's bright gate? Sleep on! "All that breathe shall share thy destiny." All shall "mix forever with the elements," or be a portion of "the clod that the rude swain turns with his share and treads upon." When time comes to an end, and the earth is withered up like a scroll, fame will say as much for these humble islanders as for the proud sons of genius in more genial climes—those whose names adorn marble columns and gilt titlepages.

Mr. Thorarensen and his son showed me their farm, a very neat, well-conducted one, and gave me a good deal of information respecting the *modus operandi* of farming in Iceland.

The great bar to improvement here, as in most old countries, is the objections the people make to change old customs. On the banks of the Nile and in Syria, in the days of Moses and

Aaron, and in Solomon's time, they ploughed with a crooked stick, and for a team used a cow yoked to a camel, or a ram harnessed to a donkey. To the present day, the cow and camel and crooked stick scratch up the ground in Syria. In Iceland, in the days of the Vikings, they had no ploughs, but dug up their fields with a spade or a piece of iron. The spade is used to this day, and the plough is still unknown. In the garden here at Hraungerthi, I saw Swedish turnips, potatoes, cabbages, lettuce, radishes, parsley, caraway, horse-radish, angelica, and some other vegetables.

One great difficulty with them in their gardening, is the want of seed. Their seasons are often short, and the vegetables, though grown sufficiently for the table, frequently will not go to seed; so that they must obtain fresh supplies every year from Denmark. Apart from the expense of this, the vessels that come from Denmark to some of the Iceland ports, arrive but once or twice in the year; and an order for any article from Copenhagen, cannot be executed unless given six months or a year beforehand—often a longer period than a man will know his wants. Accustomed as I had been to see plenty of vegetables, it did not seem like good living to find few articles of food, except beef and mutton, fish, milk, butter, cheese, curds, tallow, and lard—all animal food—with now and then a little black bread, or barley porridge. At Mr. Thorarensen's, I had set before me a fine piece of roast lamb, coffee, wheat bread, Danish butter, and good wine. These articles, however, are not all found in the houses of the poorer classes in Iceland. They can all have mutton and beef, and coffee is a common beverage, and Danish brandy is rather too common. Most of the Icelanders indulge rather freely in the use of tobacco (snuff) and brandy. Having few, or, I may say, no amusements, and families often living so far apart, that for five or six months—the winter season—their nearest neighbours are not seen, can it be wondered at that some excitement to the animal spirits will be sought

from stimulants? I never saw a man intoxicated in Iceland, and am sure drunkenness is not common; but the poorer classes do often indulge in too much strong drink. They generally keep a bottle at the head of their beds; and when I have slept in the huts of the farming peasants—not the better classes—I have always found a bottle of brandy under the pillow, or at the head of the bed; not probably placed there for their guest, but as its usual resting-place. I have sometimes gone into a slight *nosological* investigation of the contents, but have never pursued the subject farther. Perhaps I'll "look into it" at some future time. I once, while sleeping in a farm-house, waked up, and saw an Icelander, in another bed in the same room, pull a bottle out from under his pillow, and give a long pull at the contents, then lie down again. I profess a complete innocence and ignorance respecting the peculiar qualities of the Danish brandy druuk in Iceland. If it is not better than some of the "good and evil spirits" seen in some parts of the world —Western United States, for example—then I should hardly care to cultivate a close acquaintance. I never had a "pull" at one of these "bottle imps;" but I have drunk champagne with His Excellency the governor of Iceland, and had a very excellent glass of port wine with mine host of Hraungerthi.

I said the Icelanders took snuff. They do; and a way peculiar to themselves they have of taking it. Their snuff-boxes are much like a Scotch snuff-mull. I have seen them made of the horn of a goat, a calf, or a yearling, and sometimes ivory—the tusk of a walrus or sea-horse—and elegantly tipped with silver. They take a little stopper out of the small end, and pouring out two little parcels of it on the back of the left hand, apply each nostril, one after the other, and snuff it up. It is very quickly done, and quite as neatly as the method we are accustomed to see with us. That is, comparatively speaking; for, in strict truth, I will scarcely allow the applicability of any interpretation of the word *neat* to a practice, one of the most filthy—chewing

always excepted—that ever besmeared and disgraced human nature. I should have been glad to have been able to report the Icelanders free from this vice; but in this they have been contaminated by habits introduced from older civilized countries, and the truth must be told. Smoking is not so common, though pipes and segars are often seen in the seaport towns.

Respecting cultivation on the Iceland farms, the term is scarcely applicable. The meadow land is rough by nature, and they make it still more so by the way they put manure on it, leaving it in heaps. I am told that the Icelanders imagine more grass will grow on any given number of acres if the surface is uneven, from the fact that there is more area. They forget that the grass grows perpendicularly, and that no more blades can stand on an uneven than on an even surface. Then, too, it is so very uneven, that the turf is broken in many places, and, of course produces less than as if there were a level, unbroken turf. Better counsels, however, are beginning to prevail; and many farmers are levelling down their meadows, and improving their farms; and they find on trial that level land produces more than that which is covered with hillocks.

Here, at Hraungerthi, I saw considerable timber, and asking how it was conveyed here, was told that it was brought on the backs of ponies, just as every thing else is carried. Not very large timber, some that is four inches square, and twelve to eighteen feet long, is carried long distances. One or more pieces are lashed to each side of a horse, and with one end dragging, they will go from fifteen to twenty miles in a day. They cannot carry timber that is quite as ponderous as the staff of Satan, described by Milton—a Norway pine, or "mast of some tall admiral," being but "a wand" to it. I asked about their heavy articles of furniture, and was told that their sofas, bureaus, and some other articles, were made there.

The church of Hraungerthi was the best I had seen out of Reykjavik, large enough, I should think, to hold two hundred

people. Many of the Iceland churches in the interior of the country, are not more than twelve feet by eighteen, inside measurement.

I was so well entertained at Hraungerthi, and got so much information about the country, that I did not leave till one o'clock the day after my arrival. A fine breakfast was served at nine, coffee having been sent me in my room as soon as I was up. I know not when I shall ever return any of the numerous acts of hospitality and kindness extended to me by the Icelanders; and I greatly fear the opportunity never will come, unless Icelanders oftener go to America than they ever have. In fact, since old Eric and his friend sailed to the American continent, near a thousand years ago, I believe it would be difficult to find an account of a single Icelander that has ever been in Brother Jonathan's land. If ever one does go to America, may I be there to meet him! and if the neck of at least one champagne bottle doesn't get wrung off, then—then—then I'll see what.

If the Danish government will open the trade of Iceland to the world—an event not improbable—we might expect some commerce between that country and this; and then the inhabitants of VINLAND, in their own cities, could greet the followers and descendants of Erie and Heriulf.

CHAPTER XVI.

A heart that, like the Geyser spring
Amidst its bosom'd snows,
May shrink, not rest—but with its blood
Boils even in repose.

P. J. Bailey.

Whether Americans will ever have the opportunity of returning any of the hospitality that the Icelanders extended to one of their countrymen, is uncertain. At any rate, their guest was made welcome. Mr. Stefan Thorarensen insisted on presenting me with a fine copy of the poems of Jonas Hallgrimson, one of the modern poets of Iceland. Perhaps, some day I'll translate it into English verse! The pleasantest meetings must have an end; and, after the sun had passed the meridian, we had our horses caught, and bade adieu to Hraungerthi. Two hours' riding brought us to the ferry of Laugardælir, on the Hvitá, too formidable a stream to ford at this place, and far larger than I found it above Skalholt, where it so nearly carried me away. Here we found our clerical-looking friend, who helped to make the brandy-toddy disappear at the sysselman's. He was the ferryman, his house standing near the bank of the river. Like some other sanctimonious-looking fellows, he was evidently a pretty hard case —something of a sinner. No hospitalities in his house; not even a glass of brandy and water. He was agent for an Iceland newspaper, and seeing copies of the last number, I offered to purchase one. I took a copy of the paper, and then held a handful of money towards him, for him to help himself to the price. There were all sizes and values of Danish coin down to a skilling, to select from; and, though the price of a paper was just about one

penny sterling, he took a third of a dollar! At the ferry, he "tried it on" again, but there it didn't fit. He asked me a dollar, double the uniform price, for rowing me across, but I gave him only the customary rate. This was the first little variety that I had seen in Iceland character; but there are few flocks composed of all white sheep. When we arrived at the bank of the river, we saw the boat in the centre of the stream, apparently coming towards us, but on the opposite bank were two or three travellers, vociferating violently to be taken across. We halloo'd to the boatman furiously, and seeing his clerical-looking master, he came to us first. A hook was set near the landing, and honest black-coat drew it up, and found he had hooked a small trout. A comely, handsome girl came down to the water-side; and our honest ferry-master told me, a number of times, that she was his "dottir." He seemed very proud of her; and well he might, for she was a strong contrast to himself. If he ever gets to heaven, it will probably be on her account. The prettiest girl I have seen since leaving England, was selling flowers in the market, at Hamburg; and the next prettiest stood bare-headed and bare-footed, in an old brown petticoat, on the bank of the Hvitá, with a fish in her hand, and her long hair streaming in the wind.

We had the usual variety in crossing the river. Several of the horses got loose, and then tried to get into the boat, or overturn it; and some of them went swimming and floating far down the stream before they landed. The boat was rowed by the boatman and the ferry-master in his "suit of sables." The master was a regular "lazy;" and I thought the boatman would, though on the down-stream side, turn the boat round in a circle. This boatman was the wildest-looking man I ever saw in my life. He had no hat, coat, nor vest, and his long hair, hanging down on all sides of his head, made him look like a wild man. He was a picture, and would have made a subject for a Wilkie. He was not a man, though, to be afraid of; and, in fact, I should rather trust him than his master.

Our journey, to-day, led through a country, mostly level meadows and bogs, with a constant range of hills and mountains on our right. The same continued evidences of a volcanic region presented themselves, that we see, more or less, all over Iceland.

There was not as much lava, except on the hills, as we found in some other places; but a constant succession of hot springs. Since crossing the Thiorsá river, yesterday, we have passed at least six different localities where the smoke arises from hot and warm springs. We were now approaching some springs far more celebrated than any we had seen lately, and perhaps the third in point of interest of any to be found in Iceland. These springs are known as the Reykir springs, and are visited by almost everybody that comes to Iceland, being but one day's journey from Reykjavik, and far easier of access than the Geysers. The Reykir springs, to be enjoyed, must be seen before visiting the Geysers, as they are far inferior to their more celebrated spouting brethren in the north. I was told I should come to these springs after winding round a range of hills on my right; but we kept "winding round," and I thought the springs never would appear. The weather was rainy, and the roads bad, and though we had but a short journey to-day, I was glad when the wreaths of smoke announced the day's travel nearly over. I had here a hotel of the usual dimensions, and the ordinary sacred character—a small church, and the poorest I had seen in Iceland. "Frouzly" haired men, and fat, red-cheeked girls, with large pails of milk, were, as usual, seen about the farm-house. A bed of down—what all the Icelanders have—and one of those small and prettily-checked coverlets, the manufacture of the family, were brought out to the church, and with some dry clothes, hot water for my tea, and a large bowl of milk, *Nero* and I were soon fast by the altar, and enjoying ourselves as much as any two sinners in the world. Oh! if a man wants to enjoy his loaf, whether it is white bread or black, and if he wishes sound sleep, either in a church or on the ground, let him mount a pony every day, and ride in storm

and calm, through bush and bog, brake and brier, and over fields of Iceland lava.

The Reykir springs are nearly a hundred in number, and cover some fifty acres—a tract nearly as large as the Geysers occupy. These springs also comprise every variety of hot, warm, spouting, and mud springs. The springs here that spout, are more regular than the Geysers, but do not perform on so extensive a scale. They don't bore with so big an auger; haven't the calibre, nor the capital to do business on. They are very beautiful; but, to be appreciated fully should be seen before going to the Geysers. The spouting ones are intermittent, giving their eruptions at regular periods. I found, by consulting my watch, that the largest one commenced an eruption once in three hours and sixteen minutes. Each eruption continues about half an hour. This spring, or Geyser, is like a well, about five feet in diameter. It has been nearly filled up, by persons throwing large stones into it. When I arrived, it was not in an eruption, and down among the stones I could see the hot water, boiling violently. It was on the top of a rise or knoll of ground, and I could see that the water had made an aperture, and escaped through the petrified wall of the well, and appeared on the surface of the ground, a little way down the knoll, making a fair-sized brook. No water ran over the top of the well, except when in action.

At the time of an eruption, it rushed suddenly, without any warning, up through the stones, separating into a great many streams. There it continued playing beautifully, much like an artificial fountain, for nearly half an hour. The noise could be heard for half a mile, or more. The first time it played, after my arrival, was near midnight, after I had got to sleep. Hearing the roar and rush of water, I was instantly awakened, and ran to the church window, and looked out. There it was throwing up its broad, white, foamy jets, about a quarter of a mile from me. There being no darkness here, at this season, sights and shows appear to about as good advantage in the Iceland

twilight as in the noonday sun. I watched it from my window, till it settled down, and gradually sunk into the earth. I saw it in eruption twice the next morning, before I left. Its height was scarcely forty feet, but it would be a grand addition to the artificial fountains and warm baths in one of our cities. Wonder if the Icelanders would sell it? Guess not; it is one of the "lions" of the country; and if their curiosities were gone, there would be nothing to attract foreigners hither. If a stretch of the imagination could make a spring moveable property, one would hardly think of carrying off Mount Hekla or Skaptar Jokull. This Geyser is near the foot of a range of hills, the same as the Geysers in the north. The brook of hot water from this, ran near half a mile before it emptied into a cold stream that flowed past. One of the prettiest fountain-springs in the world is near the bank of this cold brook, at the foot of a very steep ridge, near half a mile from the large Geyser. The basin itself was ten or fifteen feet across, and shaped somewhat like the half of an oyster, or rather a clam-shell. The side next the hill was far the deepest, sinking into a kind of well three or four feet in diameter, where the water came out. The direction of the well was slanting or diagonal, the opening coming outward from the hill. The brow of the hill hung partly over the spring, so that in an eruption the water could not rise perpendicularly, but was forced out at an angle of thirty or forty degrees with the ground. It did not throw the water more than ten or twelve feet high, and fifteen or twenty feet outwardly. This spring makes up for its lack of size and grandeur, in the frequency of its eruptions, and the beauty of the incrustations and petrifactions in and around it. All the bottom of the spring is a mass of petrifaction, and nearly as white as the purest marble. After an eruption, the water would gradually recede from the basin, and sink down into the earth, nearly all disappearing, so that the water could just be seen down the aperture of the spring. Then it would at once commence rising gradually; and in three or four minutes it

would get to spouting, and continue going till the basin was full, and run over considerably. After three or four minutes it would gradually stop, and sink back again. A whole round of performance, rising up, blowing off, and sinking down again, occupied about fifteen minutes.

With a hammer that the guide brought me, I broke up some beautiful incrustations to bring home. The samples of these petrifactions are not unlike some found in the limestone caves of Virginia and Kentucky. The mud-springs here are very curious. Some of them are like large and sputtering cauldrons of black pudding. Again, some of them are seen gurgling away down in the earth; and, attracted by the noise and the steam, I would go and look down a hole, and see it sputtering and boiling, apparently pure clay, in a semi-liquid state. The clays here are very beautiful, and a great variety of colours, as I had found them at the Geysers. In many places near the springs—particularly near the mud-springs—the clay is soft and hot, often dangerously so. Visiters sometimes get into a soft place, and sink into it, getting their feet and legs dreadfully scalded. In these places it is boiling hot. What a terrible fate for a man to sink down here out of sight! *Nero* accompanied me from the house up to the Geyser, and when he came to the brook of hot water that ran from it, he stopped and gave a howl. Poor *Nero!* he knew it was hot and would scald his feet, and it was too wide for him to jump it. So I took him up in my arms and carried him across. He seemed to appreciate the favour perfectly. The poor dog did not know but he had escaped being drowned in the rivers, or roasted in Mount Hekla, to come here and be boiled in the Reykir springs. Good old *Nero!* many a long league we've travelled together, and you have got so you scarcely know whether you like your Iceland or your Yankee master best. I rather think you like the one best for the time being who gives you the most boiled bacon, and fresh milk.

CHAPTER XVII.

"By water shall he die, and take his end."

HAVING seen the Reykir springs, I prepared to leave. I paid the man the usual sum for the privilege of sleeping in the parish church, and for the grass for our horses, and milk for ourselves. He was evidently dissatisfied; returned no thanks, and did not offer his hand as a token of satisfaction. From his demeanour now, and more from some circumstances hereafter to be related, I think him a bad man. He was of a much darker complexion than the most of Icelanders, and a morose, churlish-looking fellow. Perhaps, from the fact that he was the landlord of the Reykir springs—a "fashionable watering-place"—he had grown worldly, and considered a stay on his premises worth more than it is at most caravanseras. He saddled his horse, however, and prepared to accompany us; probably, though, as a favour to the guide, rather than to me, as he would not like to forfeit his future custom. The guide rode ahead with the pack-horses, and I went a little way to the right to see some hot and warm springs—a part of the great family here, that I had not seen the night before. There were two, similar to two that I had seen at the Geysers, large and deep; perhaps twenty feet across, and entirely full of hot water, so clear that I could see perfectly plain to the bottom—about thirty or thirty-five feet, as near as I could judge. These springs did not discharge a very great quantity of water; but there they were, level, full, and hot enough to boil a dinner, and there they had been in that state, probably,

"Amid the flux of many thousand years,
That oft had swept the toiling race of men
And all their laboured monuments away."

A little way off—perhaps twelve rods—was a cold spring, and between that and the hot ones was one of tepid water. "Mine host" rode out near me, to call my attention to this tepid spring. It was more like a well, about ten feet across at the top of the water, which was below the surface of the ground some six or eight feet. I got off my horse, and with some caution went down the steep, sloping side of the well, and felt the water. It was about blood heat, and no steam escaped from it. The water was pitchy black, and showed no bottom, appearing of unfathomable depth. The Icelander also went down the bank, and felt the water; and while he did so, his feet gave way, and down he went into the horrible-looking pool. As he sank, he turned his face towards me with a look of terror and fear more horrible than I ever saw on a man's countenance before. May I never be a witness to another such sight! His death seemed inevitable. To my utmost astonishment, he floated. To go in after him was out of the question, and would only have resulted in drowning us both. He floated over on his back, his face just out of water, and reached his hands imploringly towards me. I stretched my whip to him; and as he caught the end of the lash, I pulled him slowly towards the bank, then grasped his hand, and got him out. The man was drunk! It was brandy that threw him into the water, and no doubt 'twas brandy that kept him afloat. Not being very fond of water, I think 'twould be very difficult to drown an Icelander. Certainly this one did not show the "alacrity in sinking" that Falstaff did. He pulled off his coat, and wrung the water out of it; and then, in his wet clothes, mounted his horse, and we rode on after the guide, who by this time was a long way ahead, crossing the green meadows.

To the left, towards the river Hvitá and the sea, it was level; and on the right, ranges of hills and mountains. In the course of six or eight miles, we arrived at the little town and church of Hjalli (*he-aht-li*). It was Sunday, and the people for many miles around were assembling for worship. Every one came on horse-

back. As for travelling on foot any distance, such a thing is unknown in Iceland. Here the landlord of the Reykir springs left us. He showed the same ungrateful, unthankful spirit that he did that morning at home, although I had saved his life. Holding forth my hand, to shake his at parting, with a wrathful look he drew his back, and said "Nay." He had no reason to treat me thus; but according to an old superstition, common in Orkney and Shetland, and I believe in Iceland, I ought to beware of him. It is related by northern journalists—see Scott's *Pirate*—that when a ship is wrecked, or under other circumstances, no one must try to save the lives of the unfortunates; for if they do, the person so saved will some day take the life of his benefactor, or in some way prove his evil genius. I don't think this Icelander can stand much of a chance to be mine, for in all human probability we shall never meet again. He is evidently not born to be drowned, but he had better be cautious how he imbibes too much brandy before going to the margin of a deep well. He may not, at another time, have a Yankee to pull him out if he falls in. Leaving Hjalli, we crossed a broad tract of country covered with the beautiful heath, now in full bloom. I stopped and gathered a large bouquet to carry home. This day was one of rain; and, though not near night, I was glad when we arrived at Vogsósar, where the guide said we were to put up. We rode up to the house—bear in mind, the Iceland towns often consist of just one tenement—and dismounted. The resident was a clergyman—Rev. Mr. Jonson. He came out, and after saluting me, had a long talk, in Icelandic, with the guide. It seemed as if I had fallen on evil men and evil times, for I did not like the appearance of this man at all. Somehow, he had a forbidding look; and I fancied we should have to travel further, as I did not believe his heart or house would open for me that night. How easy it is to be mistaken! He was like all the Iceland clergy—and like almost every one of the Icelanders—one of the most hospitable of men. Having

got the history of our former travels—as I presume he did—from the guide, and finding, no doubt, that I was one whose character would bear investigation, he "took me in;" not, however, as the landlady did Dr. Syntax; but he took me into his house, showed me a warm fire, had some fresh trout cooked for me, a fine cup of coffee, and, with a change of dry clothes, I was once more "in clover." This was near the sea-shore, on a lake known as Hlitharvatn, a kind of bottle-like arm of the sea, where the water flowed in, through a neck or strait, at every flow of the tide. About a mile south of the house, with the waves of the Atlantic nearly washing it, stood the church. This bears the name of "Strandar Kirkja," or, Church on the Strand.

Southeast of this, a mile or two, is a cape known as the "Nes." These names of "Kirk," "Strand," and "Nes," show the similarity in the languages in the north of Europe. There is Inverness in the north of Scotland; Cape Lindesness, on the southwest point of Norway; and Reikianess, on the southwest point of Iceland. Mr. Jonson had some good books in his house, and was evidently a gentleman and a scholar. He talked excellent Latin, in which dead language we exchanged our live thoughts. He evidently lived rather comfortably; and, like most of the Iceland clergy, was both farmer and preacher. He made some inquiries about America, but seemed extremely contented, and well satisfied with his own country. He told me, in order to cross the neck or strait that led to the lake, I must start the next morning at six oclock—"*hora sexta*"—when it would be low tide. We accordingly made preparations for an early start. I found it totally useless to offer him money for my entertainment. Like all the clergy, not a penny would he take. I offered a piece of silver to one of his servants, who brought up our horses; but half a dollar had no charms for him; he would not take it. He knew the value of money, but he knew it was not the custom for his master or his household to take money from strangers. Giving him, and his wife and family, our best thanks and a

hearty shake of the hand, while the morning sun was gilding the broad Atlantic, and lighting up the mountain tops, we rode away.

Our ride to-day, going west from Vogsósar was quite a contrast to yesterday's journey. At six o'clock we found low tide, and the water nearly out of the arm of the sea that supplies lake Hlitharvatn with water. A young tern, half fledged, was on a little island near us, as we passed; and the old bird showed great signs of alarm. The little fellow had not been in the world long, but we certainly were not among his enemies. The mother bird swooped down at the dog and then at us, and screamed at the whole party, and kept it up till we were far away from the little one. Skirting the strand for some distance, the guide pointed out with great interest several logs of drift wood that had been washed ashore.

The gales from the southwest bring a good deal of drift wood on shore along here, every stick of which is valuable. The coast being low, there is a long line of breakers pitching their white caps on to the strand. Large numbers of sea-fowl were riding and rocking on the waves,

"As free as an anchor'd boat."

It seems to me that the life of a sea-fowl must be a continued romance. I would like to fly and swim as they do, if I could. But some of them have floated, and swam, and fished their lives away; for their skeletons lie about on the beach. How black the whole line of coast is along here! How different from the chalky cliffs of old England, or the clear-white sand on the shores of America! Here it is all lava and volcanic sand, and quite black. From Vogsósar we continued our journey west to Krisuvik, a very small town near the coast, but it has no harbour. Never were the striking features of a volcanic country shown more palpably than where we travelled to-day. We rode on the plain, with the mountains on our right and the sea to the left.

Earthquakes, many of them very violent, happen here every few years. Then large fragments of rocks and lava are rolled down from the mountain tops far out into the plain. These were very numerous and of all sizes, some that would weigh fifteen or twenty tons having rolled from one to two miles. Here the old lava, particularly that which had rolled down from the mountains, had a different appearance from any I had before seen in Iceland. Much of this looks like the conglomerate or "plum-pudding stone" found on the coast of Scotland, in our new England States, in California, and in various parts of the world. It looks just as if in the volcanic times, when there was a general melting, a quantity of sea-worn pebbles and very hard round stones of various sizes would not melt, but became incorporated or rolled up in the dough-like mass, and here they remain like enormous plum-puddings at Christmas time.

Many of the hills and mountains are very abrupt and precipitous, like those near Reykir, and farther east, near Hraungerthi.

CHAPTER XVIII.

My hour is almost come,
When I, to sulphurous and tormenting flames,
Must render up myself.

GHOST OF OLD MR. HAMLET.

KRISUVIK is not a very flourishing city. It contains a church and one farm-house, the latter comprised in several edifices, as the farmers' houses here usually are, and all covered with green grass. Sir George Mackenzie's book, which I have with me, gives a picture of this place; and every building and object now, even to the garden wall, are an exact facsimile of the Krisuvik of forty-two years ago. Two and three miles to the north are the sulphur mountains, and at this distance show plainly the yellow sulphur, the variegated clays, and the smoke arising from the springs, "and the *mountains* dimly burning." The people at Krisuvik looked very poor and wretched, more so than any I had seen for a long time. They let us have some excellent milk, for which I paid them, and made them several presents of trifling articles, with all of which they seemed greatly pleased.

We sat on an old grass-covered wall made of turf and lava, and despatched our dinner; and then mounting our horses, rode to the north towards the sulphur mountains. If there is an interesting development of volcanic heat in all Iceland, it is in this most remarkable place. The sulphur mountains are a great curiosity. The name in Icelandic—*Brennisteinnamur*—looks a little "brimstony." In about two miles, we came to a beautiful lake of green water,—another "Grœnavatn"—like the one near Hekla. Near this, in order to examine the mountains in all their glory and fire, and see the sulphur mines, I had to leave

my horse and climb for it. Sir George Mackenzie gives a very interesting, but rather terrible, account of this mountain-pass, and the dangers he and his companions went through in exploring it. The guide, with the horses, kept the plain, and I turned to the left; agreeing, after I had explored the mountains, to come down one or two miles ahead and meet him near some hot springs, the smoke of which we could see. As the guide with our little cavalcade rode off, Nero followed me towards the mountains. As the distance widened between the guide and me, the dog would stop and cast a wistful look across the plain towards his master. As all our separations had been temporary, he felt himself safe, and with a little encouragement followed me. Still he would now and then give a lingering look towards his master, and it required more and more urging to get him to follow. The distance grew wider and wider; and now we were near a mile and a half apart, when Nero, with one glance at me, started upon the run. He flew like a deer, and taking a bee-line across the plain, was very soon with his good master and the ponies. Some sharp climbing up the mountain, nearly a thousand feet, brought me to the sulphur mines—a scene I shall never forget, a literal pool of fire and brimstone.

Had Milton ever visited the sulphur mountains of Iceland, I could have forgiven him his description of the infernal regions. Here was a little hollow scooped out of the side of the mountain; and all over and through it, yellow sulphur, burning hillocks of stone and clay, and stifling sulphurous smoke. The surface, too, was semi-liquid; in fact as near a literal lake of fire and brimstone as this world probably shows.

"Dusky and huge, enlarging on the sight,
Nature's volcanic amphitheatre
* * * * *
Beneath a living valley seems to stir;
* * * * *
Pluto! If this be hell I look npon,
Close shamed Elysium's gates, my shade shall seek for none."

Here was sulphur, bred in heat, coming up out of "the bowels of the harmless earth," like saltpetre, that was so abhorred by Hotspur's dandy. The earth itself here was principally a fine pink or flesh-coloured clay; and all over this I could see holes communicating with the mighty laboratory of nature below; and as the steam and smoke came out of these holes, the fine particles of sulphur seemed to be brought up to the surface. The clayey ground where the sulphur lay, was in most places soft, and could not be walked over without the greatest danger of sinking down through it, perhaps into the fiery depths in the bowels of the mountain. Indeed, it possesses a kind of horrible and fascinating interest. Around the edges, and in certain places, the soil is hard, and some stones are seen where one can go in safety. By having a couple of boards, a man might walk all over the ground. In some places, the sulphur was a foot thick; and as it gathered, it seemed to consolidate, and I found I could break up large pieces, beautifully crystallized. This sulphur appeared about as pure as the sulphur sold in the shops, but not as dense. It had not half that strong odour that sulphur and brimstone have in a prepared state. These mines showed signs that they had been worked, as some bits of boards and planks lay about, and there were some paths to be seen. The sulphur is taken off the surface, and then the ground is left for two or three years for it to collect again. Sulphur is so cheap, and these mines are so far from a seaport—Havnefiord, some twenty miles north being the nearest—and roads and means of transport are so scanty, that gathering it is not very profitable, nor carried on to a great extent. There are other sulphur mines in the north; some productive ones near Kravla mountain, on the shores of Lake Myvatn. How did Shakspeare get his knowledge of sulphur mines? He was never in a volcanic country. I think he got it, as he did every thing else, by inspiration. He knew that sulphur was generated in heat. In Othello, he says:—

"Dangerous conceits are, in their natures, poisons,
Which at the first are scarce found to distaste,
But with a little act upon the blood,
Burn like mines of sulphur."

After Othello kills Desdemona, he calls all the vengeance of heaven down on his head. He says—

"Blow me about in winds! roast me in sulphur!
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!"

King Lear speaks of a

——"sulphurous pit, burning, scalding—stench."

In the Tempest, Ariel, when he bothers the enemies of Prospero on their ship, shows them

——"the fire and cracks
Of sulphurous roaring."

The "beginning, end, and aim" of sulphur, seems to be fire. Poets and imaginative writers ever associate sulphur with fire. They give it a home equally with the lightnings of heaven and flames of hell, the roaring of artillery and the blazing of the volcano. It seems to have birth in the thunder-cloud; for, after the flash of lightning, we can smell it, and after the shower is over, it is often seen floating on the rain-water. To give one more quotation; King Lear says—

——"Merciful heaven,
Thou rather, with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt,
Split'st the unwedgeable and gnarled oak,
Than the soft myrtle."

To drive a thunderbolt to split the myrtle, the game would not be worth the powder, I suppose.

Near the large bed of sulphur, were several mud springs, one several feet in diameter. Here the boiling hot mud, like pitch, was spluttering and splashing up into the air in jets. I gathered several large lumps of sulphur, and then climbed over a mountain ridge, and came to another similar place. Here sulphur had been gathered, and was constantly accumulating. It seems to

be brought up by the heat that exhales from the interior of the earth, as it collects on every thing there is on the surface. If left for ages, I presume it would gather in some places hundreds of feet deep. Some have proposed the plan of laying boards on the ground for it to collect on. It would then be very clean, and easily gathered. In collecting it from the clay surface, some earth must often get in it, but there is a way of cleaning it. In places away from the sulphur, I saw the variety of beautiful coloured clays, such as appeared so plentiful at the Geysers, and at Reykir. I had a comparatively easy walk down the mountain through a sort of ravine, towards some hot springs and a green plain where the guide and horses were. Hearing a roaring sound on my left, I turned aside to learn the cause; and there was a *steam spring*, or rather a jet of steam, that rushed out of the mountain with a loud and constant roaring. The noise and escape of steam were incessant, the steam coming out in a slanting direction, at least twenty feet in a direct line. The noise it made was greater than that of one of our largest steamship engines "blowing off." Without a doubt, if this was in a manufacturing country, a house could be built over this natural steam fountain, an engine erected, and by catching the steam in a cylinder, it could be made to do good service, and all without fuel, fire, or water, and perpetually. In Sir George Mackenzie's book was a description and an illustration of this same jet of steam; and I held the picture up, and compared it to the present appearance of it, and apparently it had not altered a particle in forty-two years. This, with the six hundred years' record of the Geysers and the twenty-four eruptions of Hekla, shows the perpetual and constant volcanic heat near the surface of the ground in Iceland. Near to this was the most extraordinary mud spring I have ever seen. It was the largest and most active. It was a regular mud geyser. Imagine an enormous kettle ten feet across, sunk down into the earth, and filled to within six feet of the top, with hot, boiling,

liquid mud. There it kept boiling and spouting; jets rising from its pudding-like surface ten and fifteen feet high; and it kept constantly going. Wouldn't a fall into this caldron of liquid pitch be boiling enough for one live animal! Perhaps a boiled rabbit in this unpromising kettle of "hell broth," would be as good as the Indians' way of rolling a fowl in the mud, and then roasting it. The sulphur mountains, and all that abound near them, are among the greatest curiosities of Iceland; but Mr. Barrow, the "very enthusiastic" yachter, did not visit them, because the morning he thought of going proved a little rainy! He also consoled himself for not going to visit Mount Hekla, because "it might have been cloudy" when he got there! This is your English traveller, all over. Many is the time that I have seen them forego the pleasure and profit—if such travellers could profit at all—of visiting the most interesting scenes, just because it would make a dinner-hour a little later or a little earlier than common.

A fine brook ran through the green plain, and emptied into a little lake not far away. It looked delicious enough to bathe in; and a bath in a warm pool or brook in Iceland *is* a luxury, such as I have tasted. In speaking of these sulphur mines where the sulphur is hot—and it is gathered on or near Mount Ætna in similar situations—it may be mentioned, that there are places where sulphur is to be found cold, and dug up like other minerals. When a boy, I recollect being laughed at greatly by my eldest brother, for asking if there were not "brimstone mines?" Go to! He that runs may read, and he that runs far enough may write. "The gods throw stones of sulphur on thee."—*Cymbeline.* Go to.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Over the hills and far away."

On and about the sulphur mountains are a great many curious sights, and none more singular than the various-coloured clays. At the distance of several miles the contrast between the sulphur beds and the different kinds of clay was so great, that the hills looked as if they had been experimented on by a company of painters, so clearly did they show their coats of many colours. I stopped some time admiring the great steam-blast and its blubbering neighbour, the gigantic caldron of boiling mud. Fury! I wonder how beef and plum-pudding would boil, if wrapped in a tight bag and immersed in this boiling clay. Very well, no doubt. Methinks 'twas very wise in the Almighty placing these prominent and numerous exhibitions of internal heat in a "far off" and thinly-peopled land, where all the folks are incurious, and not disposed to pry into nature's sublime secrets farther than she chooses to show them. Now, if these ebullitions of old Dame Nature's caldron were in America, some shrewd Yankee or joint-stock company would set to boring right down to the centre to get at the fountain head; and after getting a supply of steam, proceed to let it out in streams, to turn grist-mills, saw logs, cook hotel dinners, pump water, drain marshes, and do many other "acts and things that a free and independent" people "may of right do." They would dig for gold, and, finding it not, be content with fire. With that fire they would cook, roast, and boil, warm themselves, and make baths. With the steam they would turn machinery and spin cotton. Whatever compound of metals,

mines, or elements they found, of that they would make riches, or at any rate attempt it, and some would succeed. Some, I fear, would come off as the alchemist in *Festus* did, when the devil taught him. Lucifer, in the garb of a gentleman, and manners of a scholar, says—

"I have a secret I would fain impart
To one who would make right use of it. Now, mark!
Chemists say there are fifty elements,
And more;—would'st know a ready recipe
For riches?
FRIEND.—That, indeed, I would, good sir.
LUCIFER.—Get, then, these fifty earths, or elements,
Or what not. Mix them up together. Put
All to the question. Tease them well with fire,
Vapour, and trituration—every way;
Add the right quantity of lunar rays;
Boil them, and let them cool, and watch what comes.
FRIEND.—Thrice greatest Hermes! but it must be; yes!
I'll go and get them; good day—instantly. [*Goes.*
LUCIFER.—He'll be astonish'd, probably.
FESTUS. He will,
In any issue of the experiment.
Perhaps the nostrum may explode, and blow him,
Body and soul, to atoms and to——."

And I wonder where he'll find himself? Somewhere, no doubt. But I am not going to moralize on what might be, or what will be, when philosophers come to Iceland and bore out artesian wells. Perhaps if they do, they'll come to the conclusion of some of the Icelanders, that the entrance to a certain warm region is not far from this country. These good people are very sensible, in leading upright, moral lives.

But a mountain lies before me, and I must ride. We had sharp climbing for nearly a mile, and relieved the ponies by getting off and walking up a portion of the way. On the summit of the mountain pass—perhaps 1500 feet above the plain—we had an extensive view. A long range of mountains extended far to the east and north-east; on the west were separate peaks; and to the south we could see far out on the ocean,

Smoke and steam from hot springs and sulphur mines, rose up in various places.

Our descent on the north side of the sulphur mountains was far more gradual, and quite circuitous. Passing from a plain through a rocky defile, there I saw the footprints of a former traveller, and where he had attempted to immortalize himself. It was not President Fillmore, of the United States, but plain Mr. Philmore, of England. He was here the year before, and my present guide had been his. There, on the face of a large rock, he had cut with considerable labour the letter "P," the initial of his name. As it happened to be one of the initial letters of my name, I dismounted, and finished the business with my knife, by cutting in the rock my other initial, the letter "M." The rock was a soft kind of pumice, and soon a gigantic M. stood at the right of the P. Now, future travellers who come this way, will learn with delight that the illustrious "Plinio Myghellz" one day penetrated the rocky defiles, and clambered up the snow-clad mountains of Iceland! By the scrupulously conscientious, it may be alleged that I stole another man's thunder, or at least the P with which he put it down. But of what use is half of a man's initials? It scarcely means any thing; and, like half a pair of scissors, cannot cut any thing; or like an old bachelor, without t'other half, "isn't good for nothing." Now, he put down the P, and I mated it with the M, and there the two, keeping one another company, will flourish to everlasting glory. "Plinio Myghellz," you are famous; and you, Mr. Philmore, you're "no whar."

We now travelled over the most extraordinary road I've ever seen on the face of the globe. It must have been a vast labour to make it passable; but passable it was, and that was all. It was a bed of lava several miles in extent, and known as the "horrible lava." Indeed the road was a horrible one, and I only wonder a road could have been made at all that would be passable for man or beast. Imagine a plain overflowed with

melted lava to an indefinite depth, say fifty to a hundred feet. Then, on cooling, this broke up in masses of rock of every imaginable shape and size; only none of it was small or smooth or regular—rough and sharp peaks and edges, twenty feet above the average surface; and deep, yawning cracks or seams appeared, fifty or a hundred feet deep, and large enough to swallow up horse and rider. To make a road, the rocks were broken down, and crevices were filled up to that extent, that the sure-footed Iceland ponies got over it with safety. Sometimes they jumped over the seams, and sometimes they clambered or crawled over the rugged rocks. For five or six miles it was all desolation; not one drop of water, not a single blade of grass, not one living bird, not a house, not a single scrubby tree, nor, apparently, a single specimen of animal or vegetable life, save an inferior kind of moss or lichen that clung to the rocks. We could see, now and then, a patch of stunted heather. Such is the process and progress of nature in Iceland. Lava overflows the land, and for hundreds of years it stands up, cold, black, and naked. Finally, a slight and thin species of moss—one of the most inferior lichens—begins to cover the rocks with a delicate brown or pale green. After a long period—somebody else must tell how long, for I cannot,—by the winds carrying on the dust, by the flight and rest of birds, by insects and the growth of mosses, a little soil appears, just sufficient to support a scattering and scanty growth of heather. And now this beautiful little shrub lights up and adorns the desert waste. If you look on Gunnlaugsson's large map of Iceland—a map made from surveys and observations extending over Iceland for twelve years—it will be seen that the green or agricultural portion is not more than one-third of it; and about one-half of the remainder—another third of the island—is a pink colour, indicating the growth of the heath; and the balance is snowy mountains, sandy deserts, and black and barren lava. Such is the surface of Iceland. After the bare lava tract has been succeeded by a growth of heath, another long period is

necessary to get a sufficient accumulation of soil to support a growth of grass, the most valuable and extensive vegetable product of the country. I have noticed on a beautiful meadow, where the turf had been disturbed, that only six or eight inches below the surface the rugged lava appeared. I have mentioned that no country shows more beautiful meadows, or produces more fragrant hay than Iceland. It is of short growth, but remarkably sweet, and I am sure more valuable, taken by weight, than the coarser hay grown in England and America.

Soon after getting across the plain of "horrible lava," we rode over a low mountain; and before us was the town of Hafnarfiorth. This is a nice village, nestled in a quiet little nook; and in its harbour were two or three vessels. To those who have seen the town of Scalloway, in Shetland, this place bears some resemblance. Behind Scalloway, the hills rise more abruptly than here. The village, though apparently near, was several miles away, and we rode by a good many fine farms, with beautiful, green meadows, showing a marked contrast to the lava tract that we had passed. I had been here once before, as mentioned in a former chapter, and made the acquaintance of a very agreeable and hospitable Danish gentleman and his wife. My first visit was with Professor Johnson, and he did the talking on both sides; mine host, whose name also was Johnson, conversing only in Danish and Icelandic. Knocking at the door of the neat little white house, it was opened at once, and there was a house full of young Icelandic ladies—indeed, the prettiest lot of Iceland fair ones that I had seen at one time. Neatly dressed and beautiful girls they were; not one plain one among them. All were at work, knitting, just as we see the good dames in America, when they "go visiting" in the country. One had on the little Icelandic black woollen cap, with silk tassel, the headdress of the country; and the others wore nothing on their heads, dressing in the Danish style, which differs but little from the "fashions" in Paris, London, and New York. The good little

lady of the house greeted me very cordially; but she was in a terrible fix, for she could not talk with me. She tried Danish, then Icelandic; and I *attempted* the same, stumbled through two or three sentences, stuck fast, went on again, and finally broke down altogether, ending in a hearty laugh all round, at my expense. Never mind; it's no hard task to be laughed at by a bevy of pretty girls. Mr. Johnson was not at home, having gone to Reykjavik. Though the poor little lady couldn't find her tongue, at least to any effect, I can tell what she did find. She went to her closet and found a bottle of capital wine, and she put it on the table at once; and I shall not tell how many glasses of it went under my jacket before I left.

After partaking of the solids and fluids that my fair hostess set before me, I rose to depart. Wishing them all a very good day in the best Icelandic I could muster, and shaking hands all round—the usual affectionate parting salute I did not dare attempt, being a naturally bashful man!—I mounted my horse and rode off. It was past nine o'clock in the evening, and the sun was bending low toward the Greenland sea. Hafnarfiorth is the finest Iceland town I have seen, except the capital; and it has a fine harbour. It is quite as beautiful in shape, and as secure for shipping, as Sackett's Harbour, on Lake Ontario. The land nearly surrounds the harbour, forming about three quarters of a circle. Large stacks of codfish were piled up, and great quantities were scattered about on the gravelly beach, drying. After once thoroughly dry, they tell me it does not hurt the fish to rain on them; and they leave them out of doors with impunity. They put boards and heavy stones on the piles to keep them from blowing away. In this primitive community, all goods are safe under the broad canopy of heaven, as "thieves do not break through, nor steal." Visiting seemed to be the order of the day at Hafnarfiorth. Several horses stood about, with the curiously shaped side-saddles on them—like an arm-chair—peculiar to the country. Boys were holding some of

these; and some little girls, having got helped to seats in the large saddles, were galloping the little ponies round in fine style. They were bareheaded, with their long hair streaming in the wind; and they seemed to think riding was capital fun. In fact, I never saw an Icelander, male or female, who was too young to sit in the saddle. These little northern nymphs seem to take to riding as naturally as the South Sea islanders do to swimming. The village of Hafnarfiorth has twenty or thirty houses, and perhaps two hundred inhabitants. There is but one street, and that is bounded on one side by the water, with the houses and stores on the other; and it runs in a circle nearly round the harbour, close to the water's edge. If any one comes here and wants to know where my friend Johnson lives, I can tell him; always provided he does not move, and no houses are built beyond his. It is the last house—a neat little white, story-and-a-half one—on the southern side of the harbour, the side opposite to Reykjavik. In journeying from here north, we had to climb directly up a very steep ascent, to get on the lava bed that covers the ground for many miles. It was six miles to Reykjavik, the road passing within about a mile of Bessastath, for a great many years the site of the Iceland college. Had I not by this time been accustomed to all sorts of travelling—swimming, tumbling, flying, and ballooning—I should have called this road a bad one. Indeed, it was abominable; but I was accustomed to it. There's nothing like habit. Long practice may make sleeping on a solid rock go as well as a bed of down.

Rocks were piled on rocks, and deep and broad cracks and seams were seen at intervals. Across one chasm, through which, deep in the earth, we could hear a stream of water running, was thrown a natural arch of lava, that served as a bridge where the road crosses. Winding round a couple of deep bays that set back from the sea, we put our ponies through at the top of their speed; they seemed to appreciate their approach towards home; and at about eleven o'clock we jumped from our saddles, and

with a loud hurrah dashed into the hotel at Reykjavik, where I met my old friend, President Johnson,

"A drinking of his wine."

He shook my hand so heartily I thought he would unjoint the elbow: "My dear Yankee friend, how are you; and how is old Mount Hekla, and the big Geyser, and all the little Geysers? and how are my friends the Sulphur mountains?" "Why, high, hot, and smoking; how should they be, my literary loon?" "And a fine tour you've had, I hope." "Well, I have, my boy; clear to the top of old King Coal. Yes, and a peep into the crater." "Well, you're one of the boys; and I wish I could go across the Atlantic, and see old Niagara with you." And here I had a bed; no more sleeping in churches; a bed on an old-fashioned camp bedstead—two letter X's; high diddle diddle, the fool in the middle, like the circus clown with a hoop over his head.

CHAPTER XX.

The nice young man, the modern youth,
Who drinks, and swears, and rakes,
Does little work, speaks little truth,
But plays at DUCKS and DRAKES.

Old Play.

If a man wishes to study ornithology, let him go to Iceland. The most beautiful birds in the world, those having the most brilliant, and finest, and warmest plumage, are to be found in the Arctic regions. Some of the game-birds of Iceland I have spoken of. The greatest favourites and the most valuable of all the feathered tribes here, are the eider-ducks. Their down is the lightest and softest of animal coverings, probably the worst conductor of heat, and therefore the warmest clothing that is known. The eider-down has long been one of the most important products of Iceland, and, until lately, has usually sold at several dollars a pound. The kings and princes of the north of Europe, do not sleep on the down of the cygnets of the Ganges, but on and under the down of the eider-duck. The increased products, the varied manufactures, and the widely extended commerce of the world, have brought into use other materials more conducive to comfort and health than the eider-down; and the consequence has been, the price has greatly fallen, so that now the poor peasant can sleep on down, and it can be purchased for less than fifty cents a pound.

The eider-duck—*Somateria mollissima*—is a large and fine-looking bird. The male is over two feet in length, and weighs six or seven pounds. His back, breast, and neck, are white, inclining to a pale blue; the sides white; the lower part of the

wings, the tail, and the top of the head black. On the water, he is as graceful as a swan. The female is much smaller than the male, and differently coloured. The female is pale yellowish-brown, mottled with both white and black. The tips of the wings are white, the tail a brownish-black. But a poor idea is given, however, of the looks of these birds by an enumeration of their colours. The down is a sort of brown or mouse colour. These singular birds have both the character of wild and domesticated fowls. In the winter, they are so wild that it is difficult to come near them; but in the breeding season—the month of Juue—they are tamer than barn-door fowls. On the islands all around Iceland, and many parts of the main shore, they cover the land with their nests. When left to themselves, the brood of the eider-duck does not exceed four; but remove the eggs daily, and she will continue to lay for weeks. The drake is a very domestic husband, and assists in all the little household arrangements, previous to the advent of the little ducklings. They build not far from the water, making the nest of seaweeds and fine grass, and lining it with the exquisite soft down which the female plucks from her breast. If you approach the nest—which is always near the water—the drake will give a hostile look at you, then plunge into the sea with great violence; but the female stands her ground. If in a gentle humour, and used to seeing company, she will let you stroke her back with your hand, and even take the eggs and down from under her. Sometimes she will fight and strike with her sharp beak, and she gives a blow in earnest. On finding the down gone from the nest, she plucks off more, and when the supply fails, the drake assists in furnishing it. I have been told, if their nests are robbed of the down more thau twice, they abandon the place, and will not return there the following season. Half a pound is the usual quantity taken from a nest, and this seems a great deal, for the domestic goose, at a single picking, rarely yields more than a quarter of a pound of feathers. A greater quantity of down is

gathered in wet seasons than in dry. What immense quantities of these birds come around Reykjavik, and spend the breeding season, particularly on the islands of Engey and Vithey, in the harbour! Around the houses, and frequently all over the roofs, their nests are so thick that you can scarcely walk without treading on them. The inhabitants get eggs enough to half supply them with food. The eggs are the size and about the colour of hen's eggs, though not quite so white, rather inclining to a yellow. They are nearly equal in quality to those of barn fowls. After the young are hatched, their education commences immediately. They graduate after two lessons. The old duck takes them on her back, swims out into the ocean, then suddenly dives, leaving the little mariners afloat.

Of course they swim. It gets their feet wet; but they don't mind that, as they never wear any stockings. In the winter, the eider-ducks seldom go far from Iceland. They visit the outer Skerries, and go to the Faroes, and some to Orkney and Shetland. They breed sometimes in these islands and the Hebrides, and sometimes on the main shore of Great Britain. Varieties of the eider-duck are found in all the northern regions, Siberia, Kamtchatka, Behring's Straits, Labrador, and as far south as New Brunswick. It seems a wonder, among all the bird-fanciers, that some attempt is not made in England or our Northern States to domesticate them. Let some Captain Waterton give them a chance; and, even if they fly away after the breeding season, it gives them the wider liberty, and the owner saves their keeping. The flesh of these birds is excellent, better than any other seafowl. In Iceland their value is so great for their eggs and down, that there is a law against shooting them. For the first offence a man is fined a dollar, and for the next he forfeits his gun. They are greatly alarmed at guns, and, if often fired among, they quit the coast. So, with kind treatment, they give a good return, but treat them unkindly, and they will not return at all. The power of flight of this bird,

considering his weight, is almost incredible. Mudie puts it down at ninety miles an hour. One variety, the "western eider"—*Somateria dispar*—is only found a native of the northern part of the Pacific, on both the Asiatic coast and in the Russian possessions of North America. One of these birds, in a wild state, a solitary straggler, in "good condition," was found near Yarmouth, on the eastern coast of England. That was the only specimen of this species ever seen in the British isles. What a journey was that! He must have flown from eastern Siberia entirely across Asia and Europe! Were man endowed with such powers, either natural or artificial, would he not be a traveller! I can only speak for one, but I say this boy would be a rover if he could go like the eider-duck! I wonder if there are any Humboldts among birds. If this one had not been invited to stay in England to adorn some museum, he would have had a good budget of adventures to relate, by the time he had completed the circuit of the globe. And is it unreasonable to suppose that birds sometimes actually fly round the world?

But there's one beautiful and interesting bird that has never revealed himself to the ornithologists of Europe, except on the lonely cliffs of the Meal Sack island, far from the main land and the haunts of men. Here they can be found for about three months in the summer. Not a specimen of this bird is known to exist in any collection. Some Danish naturalists have for years offered 200 dollars for a pair, either dead or alive. The great danger in approaching this almost inaccessible island, with the strong currents that run by it, and the wild nature of the bird, have, so far, defied the efforts of yachtsmen, travellers, hunters, and fishermen. The Icelander scarcely ever does any thing for the sport or adventure of the thing; and rarely will a large reward tempt him to go into any scene possessing much novelty or danger, unless his own direct duty lies in that direction. I have seen a water-colour drawing of this bird, at a gentleman's house at Reykjavik. He evidently belongs to the

penguin tribe. He is not as large as the penguin, but about two feet in height, and stands as straight up as a man. His back is dark coloured, nearly black, and the belly white. It is evidently a marine bird, and one fond of lonely regions and cold climates, and at this time possesses much interest, simply because we cannot catch him. He is entitled to his liberty; at least I shall give him my vote to allow him to remain in his present free and independent state. I have his Latin name written down; and any one that is good at deciphering bad writing, and thinks he can read this language of the Cæsars when written by a Dane, may examine this singular specimen of chirography. It appears to me to be as difficult to hunt out as a sample of the bird itself.

I have now to speak of a far different specimen of the feathered tribe—the cormorant. He is a vile bird. I say vile, for he's a glutton; his flesh is rank and unsavoury, and he's far from being a neat, tidy bird. The cormorant—*Carbo cormoranus*—is common on the shores of Europe and America, and in the islands of the sea as far north as the Arctic circle. They are apparently larger than the goose, but not so heavy. Colour black, except the wings dark brown, and sides of the head and a spot on the thigh white. Though web-footed, he perches on trees, and sometimes builds his nest there. The bill of the cormorant is about five inches in length, the upper mandible much hooked. With this he takes his prey, the unlucky loiterers of the finny tribe. He catches them usually across, and, if large, he often rises in the air, throws up the fish, and as it falls head foremost he catches him endwise, and the fish, while struggling with life, finds a grave in the cormorant's stomach. He will eat his own weight of fish in one day; and then, gorged to stupidity, he flies to a lonely cliff, spreads out his wings to dry, and lies there in a state of half torpor for several hours, like an anaconda after he has swallowed an ox. In this state, if his resting-place is accessible, the bird can be captured readily. At one season of the

year—the breeding time—this bird and the *shag*, another species of cormorant, have a crest on the head, of greenish feathers. These afterwards disappear.

A far more elegant and interesting bird, is the gannet or Solan goose—*Sula bassana*. On the wing, the gannet is the most striking-looking bird I have ever seen. They are three feet in length, and their wings stretch six feet. They are white, except the outer half of the wing, which is black, the bill, legs, and feet black, and head yellow. What crowds of them we saw, both in the air and on the water, off Cape Skagen, near the south-western part of Iceland! During the summer, the Meal Sack island swarms with them. The female lays but one or two eggs, nearly white, but not much larger than the common duck's egg, though the bird is as large as the goose. The gannet is exceedingly fond of rocky islands a little way from the main shore, like the Bass rock in the Forth, the Ailsa Craig in the Clyde, and on the Iceland Meal Sack. Near these and similar places is either a strong current or a strong run of tide, and plenty of fish. Herrings, and very often cod and haddock, are their favourite prey. On the wing, as well as in the water, the gannet is a powerful bird. With terrible impetuosity, they descend from a great height, and, plunging into the water, seize and carry off their prey. Like all fishing birds, the gannet has a keen sight, keener probably than the eagle, for he can discern his prey in the water while at a great height, and when the curl of the surface so scatters the light that human vision, aided by all the contrivances of science, cannot penetrate a single inch. How singular is nature in all her operations! But for a peculiar structure, this bird, so swift is he to plunge into the water, would be killed, or at least stunned and rendered helpless. The cellular tissue beneath the skin, on the under part of the bird, is formed into air-cells, and inflated by a peculiar muscular action; and this gives a surface of great elasticity, and both breaks the force of the blow, and prevents the bird going very deep under water.

When the gannet comes up with his prey, he rises by a regular momentum directly out of the water, and is on the wing the instant he appears above the surface.

In one more chapter, I shall complete my brief notices of some of the more interesting of the birds common in Iceland.

CHAPTER XXI.

The little boat she is toss'd about,
  Like a seaweed too and fro;
The tall ship reels like a drunken man,
  As the gusty tempests blow:
But the seabird laughs at the pride of man,
  And sails in a wild delight
On the torn up breast of the night-black sea,
  Like a foam-cloud calm and white.

MARY HOWITT.

AMONG the birds of the far North, the snow-bunting—*Emberiza nivalis*—is one of the most interesting. Who has not seen the pretty "snow-bird" during a driving snow-storm, come round the barn for some hay-seed, or to the house for a crumb? But where do they go in summer? Why, they go to Iceland, and a fine time they have of it. They build their nests in the crags; and the male perches on some rock in the vicinity and sings all day long, while the female lays five small round eggs. The male bird takes his turn in sitting on the nest; and they feed on the seeds of grass, rushes, and other hardy northern plants. How extensively this bird migrates, it is difficult to tell. We naturally suppose that small birds have less power of flight than large ones; but the Mother Carey's chicken is found on the stormy ocean, a thousand miles from land. In America, the snow-bird probably goes to the region of Labrador and Hudson's Bay in summer. Some may fly across Baffin's Bay to Greenland, or even across the Greenland Strait, from there to Iceland, a journey that would not require a sea-flight of more than 300 miles at any one place. The snow-birds that summer

in Iceland may, and very likely do, fly south, taking the range of the Faroes, Shetland, and Orkney, and so to Scotland, England, and the Continent. Great numbers of these birds spend their summer in Lapland, where they get very fat on the seeds that they gather on the plains, and in the lowlands. The Laplanders kill many of them for food, and prize them highly. In their winter plumage they are, like the ptarmigan, almost entirely white; but in summer they are more of a brown. In summer, this bird is fond of rocky and mossy places, where there are no trees and few bushes.

A singular characteristic of most migrating birds, is very conspicuous in the snow-bunting. The male is most sensitive to heat, and the female to cold. In northern climes the male of this, as well as some other birds, is often seen in spring several days before the female. Then, in their autumn migration, the female appears in the region of its winter residence considerably before the male. We should suppose they would migrate together, when the male bird would have an opportunity of showing off his gallantry; which, with another class of bipeds, is considered mutually agreeable. Many of these modest and unostentatious birds have I seen, while riding across the dreary heaths of Iceland, perched on a stone or a mossy ridge, and singing and chippering away, as much as to say, "Here I am, as far north as old Boreas will let me go." The snow-birds undoubtedly take pretty long flights at sea, for they usually appear on the coast of England and Scotland late in the autumn, along with, and apparently driven by the north-east winds, having undoubtedly flown across the German Ocean, from the Norwegian coast. On their arrival, they appear sadly emaciated and exhausted, and some of them perish. With the wind that brings them, or soon after, generally comes a fall of snow. Without resting on the water, like the Mother Carey's chicken, the gull, the pochard, the Solan goose, and other seabirds, the snow-bunting must have a weary time of it in his flight across the stormy sea.

Of gulls, there is almost an endless variety in Iceland; and, apparently, quite an endless quantity. Some of these are very large, larger than geese; and, though much "run to feathers," and not as much solid flesh as the goose, will often weigh six or eight pounds. Their wings extend above six feet. This bird is common, in some of its numerous families, wherever there is salt water; but there is one species peculiar to this country, and rarely found south of here—the Iceland gull—*Larus Icelandicus.* It is a kind of bluish ash-colour on the back, and the rest of the bird white. Like all his brethren, he is a great fisherman, and he knows where he can go and catch his dinner.

The skua gull—*Lestris cataractes*—is a bird of very peculiar habits. It is seldom found except in the Aretic or Antarctic regions. Captain Cook found it while he was skirting the polar ice. They are a very exclusive sort of bird, living in large colonies, where none but their own species are allowed to come. They are terrible fighters; and other gulls, or even the eagle or the raven, or scarcely man himself, can invade their colony with impunity. Against a large bird of prey, during the breeding-season, they will charge *en masse;* and wo be to their enemy! He will get pierced with scores of angry beaks. It is hazardous for man, and instances are mentioned of some who have gone among them without much protection to their heads, having actually got their skulls broken by these powerful birds. These gulls are not fond of fishing; they prefer that others should fish for them. When the great gull, or any other of the fishing-tribes, has got a load, and filled his stomach, neck, and bill with fish, and is flying slowly and heavily away to his expectant brood, this arrant freebooter, the skua gull, dashes at the sober fisherman; and his only chance of life is to disgorge all he has, when the skua catches it in its fall, or picks it up from the surface of the water or land. The Icelanders sometimes, in visiting the haunts of the skua, carry a sharp pike projecting a little above the

head, and the heedless gull comes dashing down at the man, and is transfixed on the murderous iron.

One of the birds found in Iceland, and peculiar to high Arctic and Antarctic regions, is the large snowy owl—*Strix nyctea.* This is a magnificent bird, two feet in length, and four feet and a half in the stretch of its wings. One of these birds adorns the parlour of Mr. Simpzen, an Iceland merchant at Reykjavik. This bird is literally as white as snow, though the females and the younger birds have some brownish feathers. The snowy owl is a bird of prey, and night and day are the same to him. The ptarmigan and the tern, cannot, all of them, find food during the long Iceland winters; therefore, some of them, in their turn, furnish dinners for his majesty, the white owl. When the wind beats, and the snow drives, so that they would sweep the birds to destruction, out comes this king of the wilds, clad in his armour of impenetrable down and feathers; and, riding on the wings of the tempest, keeps holiday amid the wildest turmoil of nature. All parts of the bird, except the point of the beak, the nails, and the eyeballs, are covered with feathers, so that he fears not the cold. This bird remains the whole year in Iceland, and is very rarely, and that in the coldest of weather, found as far south as Great Britain.

One more feathered resident, and I have done. One of the hawk-tribe, peculiar to this country, the Jer-Falcon—*Falco Icelandicus*—is a most remarkable bird. He is peculiarly adapted to the wilds of Iceland, and the cold, naked cliffs of the Northern Isles. Though not often seen, there is no reason to believe their numbers are as small as might be supposed. They are no parasites, like the skua gull. Not they. They catch their prey alive and on the wing; and so terrible and unerring is their flight, that nothing can escape them. Except his near relative, the peregrine falcon, there is probably not a bird in the world that can equal his speed on the wing. Grey, like his native cliffs, he will sit on a projecting crag, quiet for hours, until a flock of

rock-doves or some ducks are seen flying by. He leaps into the air, vaulting upwards till he has "got the sky" of his prey, to a sufficient height for gaining the necessary impetus; his wings shiver for a moment, as he works himself into a perfect command and poise, and to the full extent of his energy. Then he dashes downwards with such velocity that the impression of his path remains on the sky, like that of the shooting meteor or the flashing lightning, and you fancy there is a torrent of falcons rushing through the air. The stroke is as unerring as the motion is fleet. If it take effect in the body, the bird is trussed, and the hunt is over; but if a wing only is broken, the maimed bird is allowed to flutter to the earth, and another victim is selected. It sometimes happens that some inferior bird of prey comes in for the wounded game; but, in order to get it, he must proceed cautiously and stealthily, for wo betide it if it rises on the wing and meets the glance of the falcon. The raven himself never scoops out another eye if he rises to tempt that one. This bird is found in Norway, and sometimes in the north of Scotland. In former days they were used in hawking, and, in consequence of their strength and daring, and their unerring stroke, they were more prized in falconry than any other; but they were difficult to train; and consequently, in the days of falconry, they brought very high prices. The velocity of their flight, as well as that of the peregrine falcon, is put down at one hundred and fifty miles an hour. Compare that to a modern "express train!" How the latter lags behind! The flight of birds on long journeys is well ascertained, and numerous instances are recorded of the amazing velocity of falcons. King Henry IV., of France, had a peregrine falcon that flew to Malta, thirteen hundred and fifty miles, and arrived there the same day that he left Fontainebleau. Mudie says, the peregrine falcon is THE falcon, *par excellence*, of the falconers, on account of his rapid, powerful flight, great tractability, and other good qualities.

The *falcon*, in falconry, always means the female, as they only

are trained. The male is called the *tercel*. Indeed, our Saxon ancestors must have had some lofty sport. Wish I had been there! The jer-falcon, our Iceland bird, is not by any means confined to his native cliffs. Iceland is four or five hundred miles from Scotland, but only a morning's flight for this fleet traveller! He could take his breakfast in his native wilds, with the sun high in the heavens, fly over to Scotland, dine on a ptarmigan or a rock-dove, sleep through the heat of the day, and return to Iceland long before sunset. Such is the flight of this powerful, swift-winged bird of prey.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FAROE ISLES.

——"It is a wild and wondrous scene,
Where few but nature's footsteps yet have been."

In our outward as well as return voyage we passed near the Faroe islands. These, like Iceland, are under the jurisdiction of Denmark, and, though near 300 miles from their northern neighbour, have many features in common with it. The scenery is singularly wild and picturesque. We sailed nearly under some of the tall cliffs, and could plainly see the pillared columns of basalt, so common throughout Iceland and nearly all the northern isles. From conversation with two English gentlemen that I met a short time since, who had just returned from Faroe, where they had been "birds' nesting,"* and from one or two authentic narratives, I gathered some interesting particulars of their topography and history. The Faroe Isles are probably less known to modern travellers than any inhabited land in the northern sea. Many there are that visit Greenland—some catching whales and seal; a few to convert the heathen; some on a scientific tour; and, latterly, many in search of a distinguished navigator and the hapless crews of two long missing ships —and not unfrequently do civilized men land on the bleak and frozen shores of Spitzbergen; and any one can visit Lapland by steam; but one may go round the world and not meet a Christian man that has stepped on one of the seventeen of the inhabited islands of Faroe. The whole group consists of twenty-

* Obtaining birds' eggs of every variety that could be had, for an ornithological collection.

five islands, extending about sixty-five miles from north to south, and forty-five from east to west; and containing a little less than a thousand square miles. They lie between 61° 26″ and 62° 25″ N. Latitude, and 6° 40″ and 7° 40″ West Longitude from Greenwich. They are 185 miles north-west of Shetland, and 400 from Norway. So much for their location and size. The surface of the different islands varies in appearance considerably, but they have all remarkably bold, perpendicular banks. The north-eastern one, Fugloe—or Bird-island—is quite flat on the top; but the banks on every side are high and perpendicular, so that boats must always be raised and lowered with ropes. Oesteroe, the largest but one, is the highest of the entire group, rising 3000 feet above the level of the sea. On some parts of its precipitous cliffs are majestic octagonal pillars of basaltic rock, a hundred feet high and six feet in diameter. Were these in a land of population and wealth they would undoubtedly be selected by builders, and be seen supporting and adorning the porticoes of temples of Grecian or Roman architecture. One of these pillars, sixty feet in length, has fallen across a deep chasm, and forms a natural bridge from one side to the other. Another enormous mass of rock, twenty-four feet long by eighteen broad, is so exactly balanced across another that the strength of a finger will vibrate it; and, though the waves have been dashing against it for ages, there it remains, poised on a pivot, like the famous rocking stone in Cornwall.

Stromoe, south of Oesteroe, is the largest of the Faroe group, and is 27 miles long by about 7 broad, and contains 140 square miles. On this island is Thorshaven, the capital and principal seaport. The Danish post-ship between Denmark and Iceland, lands here twice or three times in a year. Thorshaven has a church, and about 100 dwellings; some of them comfortable framed houses. This important place is woll protected by a substantial fort—an excellent fortification, that lacks but one essential article, cannon! However, there is little chance that they would

ever be needed did they have them. Were there any thing here worth the trouble of an invading army or a piratical crew, at the most favourable landing on the islands, the natives would stand a good chance to crush their invaders with their natural means of defence, and keep them off by rolling stones down upon them. But what freaks old Nature plays here among these tall cliffs! What houses for sea-monsters does old Ocean create! The island of Nalsoe is pierced from side to side, so that in calm weather a boat can sail through it, under a natural arch, with near 2000 feet of solid rock overhead. At the northern end of Stromoe is the promontory of Myling, which rises perpendicularly to the height of 2500 feet. If the spectator had nerve enough, he might go to the brink, and toss a pebble clear into the sea from the lofty summit. One singular rock in this group of islands, rises out of the water like a lofty spire, and is called by the natives the Trollekone-finger, or *witch's finger*. The most western of the islands is Myggeness; and, though inhabited, is so difficult of access that communication between that and the rest of the group is not usually more than three or four times a year. It is surrounded by precipitous cliffs, from 1200 to 1400 feet in height; and the passage or fiorth between this and the neighbouring island is the most dangerous in the group. Off Myggeness, is Myggeness-holm,—a precipitous rock standing alone in the sea, like a solitary sentinel attendant on the larger isle. Any one who has seen the Meal-sack island off the south-west coast of Iceland, or the Holm of the Noss in the Shetland group, or Ailsa Craig in the Clyde, will have an idea of the appearance of this rocky islet. This is the only island in the Faroe group where the Gannet, or Solan Goose, builds its nest. The choice of such a location as this, or Ailsa Craig, or the Meal-sack—all favourite localities of this bird—is not altogether from the generally inaccessible nature of the place, and its consequent immunity from hostile man—though this is some consideration. These haunts of the gannet are always near a good "run" of fish,

and this is usually where there is a strong flow of the tide between two islands, or between an island and the main shore. Graba, a late traveller in Faroe, speaks of landing on the small island of Store Dimon. He says the clergyman visits this island but once a year, and the sides are so steep they have to pull him up with ropes as they would a bag of meal. When Graba landed, the natives pushed one of their number up the rocks with their long sticks that they use in bird-catching, and then he drew up the rest. In this way they all passed from one cliff to another, till they arrived at the top, 250 feet above the water. The steepness of the rock was fully appreciated on their return, when a basket of eggs was let down into the boat by a rope. In passing up and down, they sometimes walked on a narrow shelf of rock; and when this ceased, the "highway" was continued by having holes cut in the perpendicular face of the cliff, once in two or three feet, for the fingers and toes. Along this frightful precipice, a drunken native passed in safety with a sack of barley on his back.

One of the great natural curiosities of the islands, is the Vogelberg; a terrible chasm of an elliptical form, almost entirely surrounded by rocks at least a thousand feet in height. The entrance is by a narrow passage at one end; and here in this remarkable house, with the sea for a floor and the sky for a roof, are thousands of birds. Sheltered from every wind, the boat glides along with perfect safety. Gulls and guillemots swim by without fear; the seal looks from his watery cave in fancied security; and the lazy cormorant stretches out his neck to scan the appearance of the newly-arrived visiters. Long lines of kittiwakes show their white breasts and dovelike eyes; from narrow shelves of the rock, nest succeeds nest, and the downy young appear in frightful proximity to the edge of the precipice beneath. The puffins take the highest stations, perhaps because they are puffed up with ideas of their own importance, being favourites of man, and often captured for their flesh and feathers. In sheltered

and dark places, will be found the rock-dove; and dashing past like a pirate, is seen the skua, pursuing the gull or the puffin, and striving for a dinner he has never earned. Graba visited this singular place in a boat, accompanied by several natives. He describes the noise made by the innumerable seafowl, as almost deafening. Seeing a rare bird that he was desirous of obtaining a specimen of, he raised his gun and fired. "What became of it," says he, "I know not. The air was darkened by the birds roused from their repose. Thousands hastened out of the chasm with a frightful noise, and spread themselves in troops over the ocean. The puffins came wondering from their holes, and regarded the universal confusion with comic gestures; the kittiwakes remained composedly in their nests; while the cormorants tumbled headlong into the sea." That was, undoubtedly, the first gun that was ever fired there since the creation of the world. In a little time, the confusion and smoke passed away, and every thing resumed its wonted appearance.

Suderoe, the most southern of the islands, as indicated by its name, is of very irregular shape, contains about forty-four square miles, and differs materially from the most northern of the group. This island produces more and better grain, is better cultivated, and has some valuable beds of coal. Several kinds of land birds, the lark, the rail, and the swallow, are found in Suderoe, and not in the islands farther north. The natives of Suderoe are said to be more industrious and ingenious, and to speak a language differing considerably from the inhabitants of the other islands. Their principal town, Qualhoe, is the finest and best-built village in Faroe.

The climate of Faroe is much more genial and mild than would be supposed from its latitude, and far less severe in winter than many places in a more southern latitude on the continent of Europe. The curlew and some other birds winter here, while they are not found on the continent, at this season, as far north as Hamburg. The ground is seldom frozen for a month, and

snow never falls deep, or lasts over a week at a time. Neither here nor in Iceland, is the summer hot, though there are some warm days in July and August. While grain is never grown in Iceland, here they cultivate barley and oats, at a height of from two to six hundred feet above the level of the sea. Grass grows at an elevation of two thousand feet, but a little above that vegetation ceases, and the land is a desert. Sometimes a violent wind occurs, that will roll up the grassy turf like a side of sole leather; and in this way the tops of some hills get entirely denuded, the turf being carried into the sea. Trees do not grow here; these islands, resembling in that respect, Iceland and the groups of Shetland and Orkney. Thunder here, as in Iceland, is heard in winter, but seldom in summer. There are a few lakes in the islands; Lienumvatn, in Stromoe, being one of the largest. It is in a sombre, melancholy-looking valley, and resembles some of the small lakes in the Highlands of Scotland. As in all mountainous and peat districts, there are plenty of springs of fresh water.

The spoken language of the Faroese resembles that of the Icelanders, but the people have not the same literary taste and love of history. Their written language is the Danish. Originally settled from Norway by piratical cruisers, and about the time of the settlement of Iceland, the history of the islands has much in common with the more northern land. They paid tribute, or were expected to do so, to the reigning chief in Norway; but the latter was very unfortunate in his collection of it. The deputy or collector sent out for this purpose seldom returned, and was rarely or never seen in Norway again. Some attracted by the independent bearing of the people, took wives from among the fair Faroese, and settled permanently; thus paying a very direct and unmistakable compliment to a brave, independent, and republican people. Others declared themselves firm and incorruptible, and determined to execute their trust. Marriage is a most excellent institution; and all the Norwegian collectors

who took brides from among the Faroe maidens, found it, no doubt, particularly to their own advantage, and, at the same time, in accordance with the good wishes and prosperity of the islanders themselves. Those who would not accept wives on such fair terms, were never heard of again. Their bones were buried at low tide! The king of Norway kept sending his deputies to Faroe, and they and their ships disappeared one after another, till finally none of his majesty's subjects would undertake the voyage. At last, Karl Mære, a celebrated pirate, offered his services; left Norway and arrived at Thorshaven safely. He commenced collecting the tribute, and succeeded until he was himself compelled to pay a capitation tax. He was decapitated, and his companions returned without the money. Had the "wanderer" in Iceland been favoured with the office of collector, he might perhaps have visited Faroe; and, in that case, he probably would not much longer have continued a WANDERING BACHELOR.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Good workmen never quarrel with their tools;
I've got new mythological machinery,
And very handsome supernatural scenery."

THE mythology of the Northmen is so intimately connected with their literature, that any notice of the one would be incomplete without some reference to the other. The whole system is as complicated and ingenious, and quite as interesting, as the mythology of the Greeks and Romans. At the dawning of time, according to the Scandinavian theory, there were two primitive worlds,—MUSPELL, or MUSPELHEIM, and NIFLHEIM. Muspell was located in the south, or *above;* and Niflheim, *below,* or in the north. Muspell is the world of light and fire. On its border, guarding it, sits SURTUR, the god of the flaming sword, and chief of the chaotic demons. At the period of RAGNAROK, or end of time, Surtur comes forth with his flaming falchion, enters the last great battle, vanquishes all the gods, and consumes the universe with fire.* NIFLHEIM, or the world below, is the region of cold and darkness; and in the middle of it is the fountain Hvergelmir, from which flow twelve rivers.† Between Muspell above, and Niflheim below, was a wide chaotic space, known as GINNUNGAGAP. In this space, as will be seen, the earth was formed and peopled. The part of Ginnungagap,

* Surtur, as interpreted to me by an intelligent Icelander, corresponds pretty nearly to the evil one, the arch-fiend, and great enemy of mankind. The gods, or Æsir, protect and defend man; Surtur is the enemy of them all. The bituminous mineral or mineralized wood found in Iceland, is very inflammable, and known as Surturbrand, or the devil's fire. The cave of Surtshellir, mentioned on page 76, is an illustration of the character of Surtur; and from this cave many of the Icelanders to this day believe that Surtur will one day emerge, to destroy the world.

† The names of these rivers are, Svaul, Gunnþrá, Fiörm, Fimbul, þulr, Slið, Hrið, Sylgr, Ylgr, Við, Leiptur, and Giöll.

towards the north, was filled with vast piles of congealed vapour from the rivers of Niflheim. The part towards the south was full of sparks from Muspell.* When the congealed vapour was met by the heat and sparks, it melted into drops; and, "by the might of him who sent the heat," the drops quickened into life, and put on human form.† This being, so made, was called Ymir; and from him the Frost-giants are descended. There was also formed from the drops of vapour a cow named Audhumla, and on the milk of this cow Ymir subsisted. From the stones that the cow licked, there sprang a man who was endowed with agility, power, and beauty. This man was called Bur, and he had a son named Bör, who took for his wife Besla, the daughter of the giant Bölthorn. Bör had three sons, ODIN,‡ VILI, and VE; though the two latter are usually considered as attributes of Odin himself. The sons of Bör slew the giant Ymir; and so much blood flowed from his body, that all the race of Frost-giants were drowned in it, except one—Bergelmir—who, with his wife, escaped on board of his bark. From these two all the Frost giants, or race of Jötuns, are descended.§

The sons of Bör dragged the body of Ymir into the middle of Ginnungagap, and from it formed the earth. From his blood they made the ocean, which encompassed the earth on every side, like a broad ring. Out of his flesh they made the land, and from his bones the mountains; and from his hair they formed the trees, and with his teeth and jaws, and some pieces of broken bones, they made stones and pebbles. Of his skull they formed the arched heavens, which they raised over the earth; and in the four quarters of the heavens, like four sentries on the watch, they placed four dwarfs,—East, West, North and

* These, after the earth was made, became the stars that filled the heavens.

† The ingenuity of the heathen could not imagine a world created without the power of a deity.

‡ Oðinn.

§ This seems like a heathen version of the history of Noah and the great flood.

South*—and there they keep their places, and bear up the sky. The brains of Ymir they threw in the air, and of these the clouds were formed. The earth, or Midgard,† was represented as level and circular, and midway between Muspell above, and Niflheim below. Around the outer edge, next to the ocean, the sons of Bör raised a bulwark of Ymir's eyebrows, as a protection against the Jötuns. Outside of Midgard flows the great ocean; and beyond this, in another circle, is Jötunheim,‡ the land of the Jötuns, a rough mountain waste.

One of the most intricate and sublime conceptions is the myth of the ash Yggdrasill. This tree is typical of nature, and intimately connected with and partly supporting the earth. The branches of this tree extend over the whole world, and reach above heaven. It has three roots, which are very wide asunder. One springs from the region of the Frost-giants, in Jötunheim; the second from Niflheim, and the third is in heaven. The second root in Niflheim, is gnawed by the great dragon Nidhogg; and under it is the fountain Hvergelmir, whence flow the twelve great rivers. Under the root of the ash that is in heaven is the holy Urdar-fount, where the gods sit in judgment. Under the root in Jötunheim is Mimir's well, and in this well wisdom lies concealed. All who desire wisdom or knowledge, must drink of the water of this well. The Jötuns are represented as older than the gods, and in consequence they look deeper into the past. For this reason, the gods must go to the Jötuns for knowledge. Odin came to Mimir one day, and asked for a draught of water from the well; but Mimir would not furnish it till he left one of his eyes in pledge. In the branches of the ash sits an eagle that knows many things; and the squirrel Ratatösk runs up and down the tree, bearing words of strife between the eagle and the dragon Nidhogg at the root. Four harts run over the branches of the tree, and bite off the buds.

* Austri, Vestri, Norðri, and Suðri.

† Miðgarð.

‡ Yo-tun hime, or *giant's home.*

From earth to heaven is a bridge callad Bifröst, or the rainbow. Over this bridge the gods ride on horseback every day, going to and from their judgment-seat in heaven. Their horses all have names. The most celebrated is Sleipnir, the horse of Odin. He is a beautiful grey colour, has eight legs, and excels all horses ever possessed by gods or men. This famous steed, as will be seen hereafter, when ridden by Hermod the Nimble, once sprang over the gates of Hel.

The gods, or race of ÆSIR, live in Asgard, a city in heaven, in the centre of the universe. ODIN, the first and eldest of the Æsir, is at the head, governs all things, and all the other deities obey him, as children do a father. He is the highest, the supreme deity, and is supposed to be the progenitor of all the other gods; and on this account is called ALL-FATHER.* Seated on his throne Hlidskjalf, he sees throughout the world, and comprehends all things. His mansion, called Valaskjalf, was built by the gods, and has a roof of pure silver. Odin is represented seated on his throne, with a spear in his right hand, and on each side his two wolves, Geri and Freki. On his shoulders are his two ravens, who fly abroad throughout the earth during the day, and return at night, and give him tidings of all that is going on. They are named HUGIN and MUNIN, or *Thought* and *Memory;* and nothing transpires but what is caught up by them, and whispered in the ear of Odin. All the meat that is set before him he gives to his wolves, for wine to him is both meat and drink. As related in the Edda:†

> Geri and Freki
> Feedeth the war-faring,
> Famed father of hosts;
> For 'tis with wine only
> That Odin, in arms renown'd,
> Is nourished for aye.

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* Alfaðir.

† The Grimnis-mál.

The wife of Odin is FRIGA the daughter of Fjorgyn; and from these two are descended the race of the Æsir. Friga foresees the destinies of men, but never reveals what is to come.*

THOR,† the son, the first-born of Odin and Friga, is "the mightiest of gods and men." He is the god of thunder, is armed with a mallet called Mjölnir, has a belt of strength or prowess, and wears iron gauntlets. His favourite employment is fighting the Jötuns, with whom he is at perpetual war. With his gauntlets on his hands—without which he cannot grasp his weapon—he hurls at them his terrible mallet, and crushes in their skulls. He is favourable to the race of men, and keeps watch in Midgard—the home of man, or Manheim—and defends them from the giants of Jötunheim. He has two sons, Modi and Magni. Thor is represented in a car drawn by two goats; hence he is called Auku-Thor, or Charioteer Thor.‡ He is attended by the nimble-footed boy Thjalfi, and the girl Roskva the Quick.

Thor's home is Thrudvang—the home of strength—and his mansion is called Bilskirnir. This is "the largest house ever built," and contains five hundred and forty halls. Thor's marvellous exploits, his combats with the enemies of mankind—the Jötuns and the Midgard serpent—are favourite themes with all the old Icelandic writers. Though Thor is the son of Odin, he is not always considered as his inferior. Temples for the separate worship of Thor, and statues dedicated to him, were erected in various parts of Scandinavia.

The next god in rank, is BALDUR, the second son of Odin.§ He is represented as fair in form and feature, as universally

* A very rare quality for a female, to keep secrets!

† Þor supposed to be a contraction of þonar; hence his title, the Thunderer.

‡ It will be observed that Odin and Thor, in their various attributes, are represented much like Saturn and Jupiter. Thor's youthful attendants are like the Hebe and Ganymede of Jove.

§ He is known as Baldur the good; and corresponds very nearly to the Apollo of the ancient Greeks.

beloved, and the mildest, the wisest, and most eloquent of all the Æsir. Such is his nature, that his judgment, once pronounced, can never be altered. His hair is supremely fair, and in allusion to it, a beautiful plant that is almost white—the *Anthemis cotula*—is called Baldur's Eyebrow.* Baldur dwells in the mansion called Breidablik, one of the fairest in heaven. Nothing impure or unclean can enter it. His wife is NANNA, the daughter of Nep. The myth of Baldur's death is one of the most beautiful in the Northern Mythology. All the deities, as well as men, joined in his praise; and at his death the whole universe was in mourning.

FORSETI, the son of Baldur and Nanna, is the god of Righteousness, and presides over Justice. He possesses the heavenly mansion called Glitnir, the walls, columns, and beams of which are of solid gold, and the roof pure silver. He reconciles all disputants at law; those bringing their cases before him never failing to find perfect satisfaction in his decisions.†

BRAGI, the son of Odin, is the god of poetry: hence the art of poetry is called *Bragr*. Bragi has a flowing beard,‡ and is noted for his eloquence, and the correct use of language. His wife is IDUNA, the goddess of Eternal Youth. She is entrusted with the keeping of the apples which the gods, on feeling old, have only to taste to become young again.

ÆGIR is the deity of the Ocean, though a Jötun, and not reckoned with the Æsir. His wife is RAN; and with a net she catches unfortunate mariners. Ægir entertains all the Æsir at a grand feast of the gods given at the autumnal equinox.

NJORD, who dwells in the heavenly region called Noatun, rules over the winds and the waves, and checks the fury of the

* Balldurshrá; and so known in Sweden to this day.

† In this he certainly excels the lawyers and judges of the present day.

‡ There is no account of any of the Scandinavian deities using the razor; not even the weakest and simplest of them; that folly being specially reserved for men. Bragi in preserving the manly appendage, the beard, showed himself in this, as in other things, one of the foremost of his race, and a fit associate for superior intelligences.

elements, the sea, and the fire. His aid is invoked by fishermen and seafarers. The wife of Njord is SKADI, the daughter of a Jötun. Njord and Skadi have two children; FREY, a son, and a daughter named FREYJA. Frey is one of the most celebrated and beloved of all the gods. He rides in a car drawn by a boar, presides over the rain, the sunshine, and the fruits of the earth. His aid is invoked for good harvests, and also for peace; and he dispenses wealth to those who do him honour.* Frey fell violently in love with Gerda, one of the most beautiful of all the women, and ordered Skirnir, his trusty messenger, to go and ask her hand for him. Skirnir promised to do so if Frey would give him his sword, a weapon of such a rare quality, that it would strew a field with slain, at the bidding of its owner. Impatient for the possession of Gerda, he gave Skirnir the sword; and afterwards, in a battle with Beli, he slew him with the antlers of a stag. In the last great battle, where all the gods are engaged, Frey is without a weapon.†

HEIMDAL—called also the White god—is a sacred and powerful deity, the son of nine Jötun virgins, who were sisters. He is called Gold-toothed, his teeth being of pure gold. He dwells in Himinbjorg, at the end of Bifröst, and has a famous horse named Gulltopp. He is the warder or sentry of the gods, and therefore was placed on the borders of heaven, to prevent the Jötuns from forcing their way over the bridge. His ear is so acute that no sound escapes him; he can even hear the grass grow, or the wool on the backs of sheep. He requires less sleep than a bird, sees a hundred miles around him on every side, and by night as well as by day. In time of danger, or when he wishes to call the gods together, he blows a blast on his Gjallar-horn, that sounds throughout all worlds; and the gods immediately assemble.

HÖDUR is a deity who is blind, but possesses great strength.

* A character much like Ceres.

† In this myth we see a quiet satire on those who, to gratify some darling passion or desire, sacrifice their most valuable possessions.

He is more fully described in the account of Baldur's death.

VIDAR, surnamed the Silent, and noted for his heavy shoes, is the son of Odin and the Jötun-woman Grida. He possesses immense strength, being nearly as strong as Thor himself. Great reliance is placed on him in cases of emergency.

VALI, the son of Odin and Rinda, is most valiant in war; and, in his youth, was as precocious as the Mercury of the ancients. He slew Hödur, the murderer of Baldur, before he was a day old.

ULLUR, the son of Sif, and stepson of Thor, has great skill in the use of the bow. His name signifies the White, or the Wool-like. He favours the winter, and travels with great speed on skates and snow-shoes. He is very handsome, has every quality of a warior, and is often invoked by those who engage in single combat. Vidar and Vali will survive the destruction of the world by the fire of Surtur, and dwell on the plain of Ida, where Asgard formerly stood. Thither shall come to meet them, Modi and Magni, the sons of Thor, bringing with them their father's mallet.

Of the goddesses, FRIGA, the wife of Odin, is the highest. Her mansion is called Fensalir. The next in rank is SAGA, the goddess of History. Her house is Sökkvavek, and is of great size. The goddess EIR presides over the art of Healing.* GEFJON is a maid, and all who die maids go to her, and become her handmaidens. FULLA is also a maid. She has beautiful hair that flows over her shoulders, and a gold ribbon adorns her head. She is an attendant and confidant of Friga, and is entrusted with her secrets. FREYJA is the wife of Odur; and they have a daughter, Hnossa, who is celebrated for her beauty. Odur travels through distant countries; and, in his absence, Freyja weeps, and her tears are pure gold. As she goes over the world in search of her husband, the people give her different names. She rides in a chariot drawn by two cats. The goddess LOFNA is mild in

* A sort of female Æsculapius.

her demeanour, and takes delight in smoothing the path of lovers, and promoting the success and union of those who are sincerely attached to each other. VORA is a goddess that punishes lovers' false vows and perjuries. GNA is the messenger of Friga, and is sent by her on various errands through different worlds. She has a horse called Hófvarpnir, that can travel through water or air. Besides these, there are many other goddesses whose duty it is to serve in Valhalla, wait on the gods, take care of their drinking-horns, &c. These are called the Valkyrjor.* Odin sends the Valkyrjor to every battle-field, to decide who shall be slain, and declare on which side victory shall rest. They carry the spirits of the slain to Odin, in Valhalla.

Among the inferior deities are three maidens called Norns. Their names are Urd, Vernandi, and Skuld; or, Past, Present, and Future. They preside over the birth and destinies of men, and determine their fate and length of life. There are also other Norns besides these three. Some of them are of heavenly origin, and dispense good destinies. Others are of the races of elves, or evil spirits; and men who meet with numerous misfortunes are said to be under the influence of evil Norns. There is also a class of inferior beings known as Dwarfs. They dwell in caves and caverns of the earth.

* Their names are Geirölul, Göll, Herfjötur, Hildur, Hlökk, Hrist, Mist, Radgrid, Randgrid, Reginlief, Skeggold, Skögul, and þrudur.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SCANDINAVIAN MYTHOLOGY CONCLUDED.—ADVENTURES OF THOR, AND THE DEATH OF BALDUR.

NEARLY all the deities have been noticed. The origin of night and day, and the sun and moon are thus given. The giant Njörvi, who dwelt in Jötunheim, had a daughter called Night,* who, like all of her race, was of a dark and swarthy complexion. Night married a man named Annar, and had a daughter called Earth.† She next espoused Delling, one of the Æsir; and their son was Day,‡ a child light and beauteous like its father. Odin then gave to Night and her son Day two horses and two cars, and set them up in the heavens, to drive successively one after the other round the world in twelve hours' time. Night goes first, driving the horse Hrimfaxi; and he, every morn, as he ends his course, bedews the earth with foam that falls from his bit. Day follows with his horse Skinfaxi; and from his mane light is shed over the earth and the heavens. The man Mundilfari had two children so lovely and graceful that he called the boy Máni (moon,) and the girl Sol (sun.) The gods, being angry at the man's presumption, placed his children in the heavens. The bright and illuminated car of the sun, which the gods made out of the sparks that fell from Muspelheim, to give light to the world, was drawn by the horses Arvak and Alsvid, and driven by Sôl. Máni was set to direct the moon in his course, and guide his increasing and waning aspect. Two wolves, Sköll and Hati, are constantly in pursuit of the sun and moon; and it is on

* Nót. † Jorð ‡ Dagr.

this account that they fly so swiftly through the heavens. One day these wolves will overtake and devour them.

One of the gods is named LOKI; and to him is ascribed nearly all the evil that is suffered in the world. He was the calumniator of the Æsir, the contriver of frauds and mischief, and the disgrace of both gods and men. He had a terrible offspring by Angurbodi, a giantess of Jötunheim. These were, the wolf Fenrir, the Midgard serpent, and Hela, or Death. The wolf Fenrir could only be fed by TYR, the god of Bravery, who, as will be seen, was called the one-handed. Tyr is the most daring and intrepid of the gods. He dispenses valour in battle, and his aid is invoked by warriors. The gods were warned by the oracles, that the power of the wolf was becoming dangerous; and Tyr attempted to make a fetter to bind him. The first trial failed, the wolf snapping the cords asunder as if they had been threads. Tyr next made the fetter called Gleipnir, fashioning it out of six things; namely, the noise made out of the footfall of a cat, the beards of women, the roots of stones, the sinews of bears, the breath of fish, and the spittle of birds. Though this cord was as fine and soft as silk, the wolf would not consent to be bound with it, unless Tyr would let him take one of his hands in his mouth. To this he consented; and the gods then bound the wolf; and, finding he could not free himself by breaking the fetter, he revenged himself by biting off the right hand of Tyr. When the offspring of Loki were born, Odin sent for them; and after having the wolf put in fetters, threw the Midgard serpent into the ocean that surrounded the earth. Here the monster grew to such size that he encircled the whole earth, with his tail in his mouth. HELA (Death) was cast by Odin into Niflheim; and her abode is known as Helheim, or Hel. Her habitation is surrounded by exceedingly high walls, and strongly-barred gates. Her hall is called Elvidmir; Hunger is her table; Starvation, her knife; Delay, her man; Slowness,

her maid; Precipice, her threshold; Care, her bed; and Burning Anguish forms the hanging of her apartments.

The spirits of those who fell in battle, were carried at once to Odin, in Valhalla—the hall of the slain; and on this account Odin is called Val-father, or father of the slain. Those who die a natural death, or of old age, were taken to Hel. These abodes, however, were not of eternal duration, but only continued until Ragnarok—the final judgment and destruction of the earth and all material things. Valhalla is not represented as a place of unalloyed happiness, nor Hel of continued misery; yet the former was far the most desirable abode. The joys of Valhalla are imagined and pictured on the basis of all our ideas of happiness in another world—the highest degree of felicity known in this.*

The joys and employments in Valhalla, will consist of eating, drinking, and fighting. The spirits of the slain will roam through the vast hall, and eat and drink with the Æsir. The whole celestial banquet will consist of ale, and the flesh of one wild boar, which being cut off every day, renews itself every night. The goddesses, or women, wait at table, and fill the drinking-horns. When the morning repast is over, they all ride out into the plain, and fight, and cut one another to pieces.

* The learned and enlightened Christian imagines Heaven as a place or state of being, where evil, sin, and pain are unknown; and where the celestial employments will consist in investigating the works of the Creator, and glorifying his name. The poor Indian dreams of pleasant hunting-grounds—some happy island in the watery waste—and thinks,

——— "admitted to that equal sky,
His faithful dog shall bear him company."

An old lady who had just "experienced religion," was asked what she thought would be the employments of the good in heaven; or how they would pass their time? She replied, that she thought she would be permitted to sit all day, in a clean white apron, and sing psalms. We need not smile at the simplicity of the good old dame; for, is it not probable that the celestial labours and enjoyments will as far exceed the ideas of the most learned Christian, as his imagination goes beyond that of the good woman, or the rude joys of the unlettered savage!

They are, however, perpetually renewed; and, towards evening, all resume their usual form, and return to drink ale together. Valhalla was of immense size, had five hundred and forty doors, and was spacious enough to contain the Æsir, and all the brave spirits that Odin called to him from earth. In all the accounts of Hel and Valhalla, to be found in the ancient Eddas, there is nothing that goes to prove that the Scandinavians believed in a place of eternal punishment. One or two brief passages from the Younger Edda are quoted to show that such was the case; but these are proved to have been interpolations in the manuscript of the Edda, by a modern Christian writer.

An early period is spoken of, called the Golden Age. Odin had constructed a court, or hall, of great magnificence. It was resplendent on all sides, within and without, with the finest gold. He appointed rulers or judges, to judge with him the fate of men; and in the hall he had twelve seats for them, besides his own throne. This court of justice was called Gladsheim. Another edifice, a very fair structure, was erected for the goddesses. This was called Vingolf. Lastly, a smithy was built, and furnished with hammers, tongs, anvils, and all manner of tools for working in wood, stone, and metal. All the moveable things belonging to the gods were made of gold; and from this the period was known as the Golden Age.

The age lasted until women arrived from Jötunheim, and corrupted it.

The exploits of Thor form the subjects of the most lengthy and characteristic legends in the mythology of the Scandinavians. At one time Ægir, the ocean deity, entertained all the gods in Asgard, giving them a great feast, at the period of the autumnal equinox. He furnished enough to eat, but drink was greatly wanting; for he had no vessel large enough to brew ale for such a numerous company. Thor hearing that the giant Hymir owned a famous caldron of great size, he, in company with Tyr, set out for Jötunheim to obtain it, determined either by fair

means or foul to carry it away. After various adventures he gets it, claps it on his head like a huge hat, and walks off with it, the ears of the caldron reaching down to his heels! The giants follow and attack him; but he slays them all with his terrible mallet. Having obtained the caldron, Ægir brewed as much ale as was required; and Loki, Thor, and all the company, have a regular drinking bout. It ended as such scenes usually do—in a fight; and Loki killed one of Ægir's servants, for which he was expelled by the gods, and kicked out of doors. He was afterwards, however, restored to his place.

Thor and Loki had a famous journey to Jötunheim, the land of the giants. Thor, as usual, rode in his car drawn by two goats; and when night came they put up at the cottage of a peasant, both the travellers assuming the form and costume of men. Thor killed his goats, and after flaying them, put them in the kettle to cook for their supper, and asked the peasant and his family to partake with him. The peasant's son was named Thjálfi, and the daughter Röskva. Thor told them to throw all the bones into the goat's skins, which were spread out on the floor; but Thjálfi broke one of the bones to get at the marrow. The next morning, Thor raised his mallet, consecrated the goat's skins, and they instantly assumed their usual form, alive and well and ready to pursue their journey; but one of the goats was found to be lame in one leg. To appease the anger of Thor, the peasant offered any thing he possessed as a compensation. Thor chose both his children; and ever after Thjálfi the Nimble and Röskva the Quick were his attendants. They then continued their journey, passed out of Mannheim, crossed a broad ocean, and entered a deep forest. They saw a large hall, and, entering it, went to sleep in a deep room at one end. During the night, there was an earthquake and a terrible roaring, which shook the whole edifice. In the morning they found a giant of enormous size, sleeping and snoring near them; and the vast edifice was his glove which he had thrown off, and

they had slept in the thumb of it. The giant's name was Skrymir, and when he awoke he knew Thor at once and called him by name. He offered to carry the wallet of provisions and relieve Thjálfi, and after breakfast they journeyed together. Thor, wishing to get rid of his new fellow-traveller, when night arrived, hurled his mallet at him after he was asleep; and it was buried deep in his skull. Waking up, the giant asked if a leaf had fallen on his head. He slept again, and Thor made two more efforts—once his mallet going deep into his cheek; and again, burying it in his head up to the handle. The giant merely put up his hand and asked if a bit of moss or an acorn had fallen on him. He soon, however, left Thor, and pursued his journey to the north. The travellers arrived at the city of Utgard, situated in a vast plain, and immediately paid their respects to Utgard-Loki, the king. His majesty looked at the Thunderer with great contempt, called him a stripling, and said if he was not mistaken it must be Aku-Thor. The king challenged Thor and his companions to try various feats of skill and strength with his subjects, the giants of Jötunheim. Loki sat down to a trough filled with meat, and eat a race with a giant; but he got vanquished, his competitor eating the most, and swallowing bones and all. Thor then produced Thjálfi to run a race, and he was completely distanced. Thor himself then attempted a drinking bout with the giants; but at three long pulls he could not empty a single horn. He then tried his hand at lifting; but though the giants only furnished a common grey cat to be lifted, Thor could not raise him from the ground, only lifting one foot a short distance. Then he tried wrestling; but though his competitor was a wrinkled old woman, he could not throw her, but came near being thrown himself. Thor confessed that he was vanquished, and turned his steps away, being accompanied without the walls of the city by his majesty Utgard-Loki, in person. Then the king tells Thor that, if he has his

way, the god shall never come into his place again, for he fears him and only got the better of him that time by stratagem. He said it was he that met him in the forest, and he had a mountain before him when he slept; and if Thor would see it on his return, he would observe two deep valleys where he buried his mallet, while he thought he struck Utgard himself. The two immense glens that could be seen in the mountain were but the dints of Thor's mallet. In the contest of eating, the competitor of Loki was Fire itself, that consumed all before it. Thjálfi ran a race with Hugi—Thought—which flies faster than the fleetest being that is created. The old woman who wrestled with Thor was Old Age, which could in time lay every thing low. What appeared to be a cat, was the great Midgard serpent, that encompassed the whole earth. The horn he drank from extended to the sea itself; and in this he performed a most prodigious feat, for he settled it greatly, as could be seen, and which was called the ebb. Thor, on hearing how he had been vanquished by stratagem, raised his mallet to strike down the giant; but on turning, he had disappeared, and, instead of a city near by, he saw nothing but a vast plain. This was the end of Thor's adventures in Jötunheim. Then to rëestablish his reputation, Thor went out to fish for the great Midgard serpent. He took no companions, not even his car or goats. He travelled in the guise of a young man, and put up at the house of a giant named Hymir, who was going fishing; and he asked Thor to provide some bait. He went into a herd of the giant's oxen, and seizing the largest bull, wrung off his head; and returning with it, the two put off to sea together. They rowed much farther than the giant had ever gone before; and Thor, baiting a hook and line of great strength with the head of the bull, cast it out. The Midgard serpent immediately swallowed it, and Thor drew upon him. The scene was now most dreadful. Thor pulled so hard that his feet broke through the boat, and

went down to the bottom of the sea. Thor darted looks of ire at the serpent, and he in turn spouted floods of venom upon him. The giant turned pale with fright, took out his knife and cut the line, when the serpent sunk under water. Thor then grasped his mallet and hurled it at the monster; but he was low down in the sea, and escaped, though some say his head was struck off at the bottom of the ocean. Thor then, with his fist, hit the giant a blow under the ear that knocked him out of sight; and then, with rapid strides, he waded ashore.

Baldur the Good having dreamed that harm was to come to him, Friga, his mother, hearing of it, exacted an oath from every thing, animate and inanimate, stones, trees, fire, metals, and all living things, that they would not hurt Baldur. One thing only was omitted—the misletoe. It was then a favourite amusement for Baldur to stand up, and have the Æsir throw at him their darts, javelins, battle-axes, and other missiles; for none could harm him. Loki, under the guise of an old woman, hearing that the misletoe had not taken the oath, gathered a branch and calling Hödur, the blind god, told him to hurl it at Baldur, saying he would guide his arm, and it being only a twig, it could not hurt him. Hödur threw it under the guidance of Loki; and Baldur the Good was slain. The gods were speechless with horror, looked at each other, and broke out into violent lamentations of grief. Odin was most sensible of the great loss the Æsir had suffered; and Friga asked who would gain her love and good-will by riding to Hel, and try to find Baldur, and offer to Hela a ransom for his return to Asgard. Hermod offered his services, and left, mounted on Odin's famous horse, Sleipnir. While Hermod was on this mission, Baldur's body was borne to the seashore to be burnt. His ship Hringhorn, the largest in the world, was required for a funeral pile; but no one could move it, till they sent to Jötunheim for a famous giantess named Hyrrokin. She came mounted on a wolf, with

twisted serpents for a bridle, and with one push moved the vessel as they wanted it. Baldur's body was borne to the funeral pile on board the ship; and the ceremony had such an effect on Nanna, that she died of grief, and her body was burned on the same pile with her husband's. Thor hallowed the pile with his mallet, and during the ceremony kicked a dwarf into the fire, because he ran before him. At Baldur's obsequies was a vast concourse. First, there was Odin with Friga, the valkyrjor, and his ravens; then Frey in his car drawn by the boar with golden bristles. Heimdall rode his horse, Gulltopp; Freyja drove in her chariot drawn by cats. There were also present many Frost-giants and giants of the mountains. Baldur's horse, fully caparisoned, was burned along with the body of his master.

Hermod pursued his journey till he arrived at the gates of Hel, and found them barred. He alighted, tightened the girths, mounted, put spurs to the horse, and at one leap sprang over the gate without touching. He found Baldur occupying the most distinguished seat in the hall; and after spending a night with him, asked Hela (death) to let Baldur return to Asgard. She said she would consent to it, provided Baldur was so beloved that every thing would weep for him. Hermod then returned, bearing a gold ring as a present to Odin from Baldur, and some valuable gifts from Nanna to Friga. Every thing wept for Baldur, except one old woman, who refused. This was found to be Loki in disguise, who never ceased to work evil among the Æsir. To escape the wrath of the gods, Loki changed himself into a salmon, was pursued down a river, and in leaping a net was caught by Thor in his hands. The gods then confined him in a cavern, with a serpent directly over him; and, as the venom drops on him, he writhes and howls, and this makes that shaking of the earth that men call earthquakes. Loki's two children were taken, and one changed to a wolf; and he immediately devoured the other.

The end of all material things is known as Ragnarök—the twilight of the gods, and conflagration of the universe. The world becomes corrupt; a wolf devours the sun, and another wolf the moon; trees fall, and mountains tumble to pieces. The wolf Fenrir opens his enormous mouth, the lower jaw being on the earth, and the upper reaching to heaven; the Midgard serpent gains the land, and heaven is cleft in twain. The sons of Muspel ride through the breach, led by Surtur, in the midst of flaming fire. Bifröst breaks in pieces, and a vast assemblage gathers on the battle-field of Vigrid, which is a hundred miles long. Heimdall stands up, and, with all his might, blows a blast on the Gjallarhorn, which arouses all the gods. Odin asks advice of Mimir; the Æsir, and all the heroes of Valhalla, led by the All-father, go forth to the field of battle. The ash, Yggdrasill, begins to shake, a dissolution of all things is at hand. Odin places himself against the wolf Fenrir, and Thor encounters the Midgard serpent. Frey meets Surtur, and they exchange terrible blows; but Frey falls, as he has been without his trusty sword ever since he fell in love with Gerda. The dog, Gram, that had been chained in a cave, breaks loose, and attacks Tyr, and they kill each other. Thor slays the Midgard serpent, thereby gaining great renown; but, retiring nine paces, he falls dead on the spot, being suffocated with the venom that the dying serpent throws over him. Odin is swallowed by the wolf; and Vidar, coming up, with his foot on the lower jäw and his hand on the upper, he tears the animal's jaws apart, and rends him till he dies. Loki and Heimdall fight and kill each other. This most terrible battle being over, Surtur darts fire and flame over the world, and the whole universe is consumed by it. A heaven, and many abodes, both good and bad, are supposed to exist after this; for the spirits of all who have lived are immortal. A new earth, most lovely and verdant, shall rise out of the sea, and grain shall grow unsown. During the conflagration, a woman named Lif (Life), and a man named Lifthrasir, lie concealed in Hodmimir's forest. They feed

on morning dew, and their dsecendants soon cover the earth again. Vidar and Vali survive the conflagration, and dwell on the plain of Ida, where Asgard formerly stood. Thither went the sons of Thor, Modi and Magni, carrying with them their father's mallet, Mjolnir. Baldur and Hödur repaired thither from the abode of death (Hel,) and there they hold converse on their past perils and adventures. A famous ship, called Skidbladnir, is spoken of, that is so large that it would hold all the Æsir, and their weapons. It was built by the dwarfs, and presented to Frey; and being constructed of many pieces and with great skill, when not wanted Frey could fold it up like a piece of cloth and put it in his pocket. In the language of the Edda,

> The ash Yggdrasill,
> Is the first of trees;
> As Skidbladnir of ships,
> Odin of Æsir,
> Sleipnir of steeds,
> Bifrost of bridges,
> Bragi of bards,
> Hábrok of hawks,
> And Garm of hounds is.

CHAPTER XXV.

EARLY LITERATURE OF THE ICELANDERS—EDDAS AND SAGAS—MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE PERIOD—EXTRACTS FROM THE POETIC EDDA.

According to the system of the Northmen, man and woman were the last and most perfect productions of the creative power. After the Æsir, the Jötuns and the Dwarfs had a being. Odin and two other deities were walking on the seashore, and came to two trees, and from them they made the first man, Ask, and the first woman, Embla. They had allotted to them, for a residence, Midgard, which, from being the home of man, was called Mannheim; and from these two, Ask and Embla, are descended the whole human race. Some time after this, Heimdal, the warder and trumpeter of the gods, wandered over the earth under the name of Rigr. He was received and hospitably entertained by the descendants of Ask and Embl; first by Ai—Great Grandfather,—and Edda—Great Grandmother,—who dwelt in a lowly hut; next by Afi—Grandfather,—and Amma—Grandmother,—living in a comfortable habitation; and, lastly, by Father and Mother,* who occupied a splendid mansion. The deity, by his beneficent presence, infuses a vital energy into his hosts; and, in due time after his departure, Edda, Amma, and Mother, each gave birth to a son. The infants, are sprinkled with water at the moment of their birth; Edda's son is called Thræll—*Thrall;* Amma's, Karl—*Churl;* and mother's, Jarl, or *Noble;* and these three, Thrall, Churl, and Noble, have each a numerous offspring. Here is an aristocratic explanation of the

* Faðir and Moðir.

three castes that appear, at an early period, to have formed the framework of Scandinavian society,—the thralls, or slaves; the churls, or free peasants—odalsmen, as they were afterwards termed, and the nobles. The poet, in his Edda,* describes the thralls as having black hair, an unsightly countenance, uncouth appearance, and of low and deformed stature; physiological traits characteristic of the Lapps, who were probably reduced to a state of vassalage by their Scandinavian conquerors. The destiny of the thralls is to toil incessantly, in order that by their labour the churls may obtain sufficient produce from the earth to enable the nobles to live with becoming splendour. The poet shows his contempt for this class, by giving Thrall's sons such names as Frousy, Stumpy, Plumpy, Sootyface, Slowpace, Homespun, &c., and calling his daughters Lazybody, Cranefoot, Smokynose, and Tearclout. Among the churls, sons of Karl, we find such names as Stiffbeard, Husbandman, Holder (of land), and Smith; the daughters being designated Prettyface, Swanlike, Blithespeech, Chatterbox, &c. The poet, though, reserves the most of his eloquence for the nobles who, he says, have fair hair, a clear complexion, and fine piercing eyes; their sole avocations being to wield the sword, dart the javelin, rein the fiery steed, chase the deer, and other elegant amusements, which Jarl's descendants still delight to astonish the churls with. Jarl—equivalent to Earl—marries Erna—Lively—the daughter of Hersir—Baron; but the poet only gives the names of the sons; names that usually designate relationship, as Cousin, Nephew, &c.

The literary history of Iceland, in the early ages of the republic, is of a most interesting character. When we consider the limited population of the country, and the many disadvantages under which they laboured, their literature is the most remarkable on record. The old Icelanders, from the tenth to the sixteenth century, through a period in the history of the world

* The *Rigsmál*, a poem of the Mythic-ethnologic class.

when little intellectual light beamed from the surrounding nations, were as devoted and ardent workers in the fields of history and poetry as any community in the world, under the most favourable circumstances. Previous to the present century, the learned world seemed to consider the writings of the Icelanders as almost unworthy of notice. With the discovery, through old manuscripts, that the early voyages of the Icelanders extended to the American coast, there was an interest aroused, and curiosity was excited to learn the entire history of this energetic and intellectual race. Springing from the old Norse, or Norwegian stock, they carried the language and habits of their ancestors with them to their island home. During a period of nearly one thousand years, since the first settlement of the country, the Icelandic has undergone less change—with perhaps one exception—than any language now spoken. Though a very large number of our English words are derived direct from the Icelandic, yet the most learned and indefatigable of our lexicographers, both in England and America, have acknowledged their ignorance of this language. Through the labours of Professors Rask, Rafn, and Müller, M. Mallett, Mr. Finn Magnusen, and others, the language and literature of this country are now open to us.

The writings of the early Icelanders are principally Eddas and Sagas. The Eddas are the heroic poems of the day, and describe the deeds and prowess of heroes and warriors; and some of them abound in mythological machinery to an extent quite equal to the writings of Homer and Virgil. The two principal Eddas are known as the poetic, or *Elder* Edda, and the *Younger*, or Prose Edda. The Sagas are historical writings; give a picture of the public and private life of the Icelanders, their manners and customs, feuds, combats, voyages, and discoveries, biography of eminent persons, and such a description of their national and social state, as enables us to see the character and habits of the people during the early years of the Iceland Republic.

The ELDER EDDA consists of thirty-nine poems, and is ascribed to SÆMUND SIGFUSSON, surnamed FRODE, or, "the *learned*." He flourished at the close of the eleventh, and beginning of the twelfth century; was educated at the Universities of France and Germany, and returned to Iceland and became the parish priest of Oddi, a village near the foot of Mount Hekla. He devoted himself to the education of youth, deciphering Runic manuscripts, and the cultivation of letters. Some suppose that he was only the author of one of these poems; that he found the others in manuscript, or obtained them from oral tradition. In proof of this, one only—the Sólar-ljóth—Lay of the Sun—contains the least allusion to Christianity. All the others bear marks of greater antiquity than the eleventh century.

The PROSE, or YOUNGER EDDA, was written many years subsequent to the Elder Edda. It contains a complete system of Scandinavian Mythology, all, or nearly all, derived from the Elder. Snorri Sturlason, one of the most remarkable men in the annals of Iceland, is said to be the writer and compiler of the younger Edda. The prominent incidents of his life give a striking picture of the manners of the age in which he lived. This was several generations later than the time of Sæmund Frode. Snorri was born at Hvam, in Myra Sysla, in the year 1178. He was a historian and poet, as well as a powerful political chieftain, and at one time the wealthiest man in Iceland. During his life he was twice elected Supreme Magistrate, or President of the Republic. At three years of age, he was taken into the care of John Lopston, of Oddi, grandson of Sæmund Frode, and lived with him till he was twenty years of age. He flourished in a stormy period, and led a turbulent and ambitious life. He received an excellent education from his foster-father, and turned every favourable circumstance to his own advantage. Appreciating the adage, that "money is power," he married Herdisa, the daughter of a priest called Bersi the Rich—a very enviable surname, which, no doubt, enabled the reverend gentleman to

brave the bulls and decrees of popes and councils, and take to himself a wife—who brought him a very considerable fortune. If we judge by the career of Snorri, Christianity had not, at this period, much improved the character of the Icelanders. We have the same turbulent and sanguinary scenes, the same loose conduct of the women, and the perfidy and remorseless cruelty of the men, as in Pagan times. Snorri lived twenty-five years with Herdisa, obtained a divorce, married a rich heiress, quarrelled with a son and daughter of his first wife respecting pecuniary matters, had a number of illegitimate, or, rather, adulterine children, and was finally murdered by three of his sons-in-law and a step-son. Three of his illegitimate daughters were married to men of rank, and, in more respects than one, were like the daughters of Lear. Their husbands were obliged to get rid of them by suing for legal divorces, on account of their loose conduct. One of them, Ingjibjörg, married a second time, but was again divorced, and became notorious, even in Iceland, for her debaucheries.* By his marriages, his learning, shrewdness, and ambition, Snorri became the most wealthy and powerful man in the country, and for some time the political head of the state. We are told that sometimes he made his appearance at the national assembly with eight or nine hundred men in his train. His ambition was literary, as well as political, and his celebrity was not confined to his own country. He visited Norway, composed and recited a poem in praise of Hacon, a powerful jarl; and strengthened his position at home by an alliance with neighbouring chiefs on the continent. Like the emperors of Rome, he constructed a sumptuous bath of cut stone and cement, which, to this day, is called *Snorri-laug*, or Snorri's Bath. It is circular, and spacious enough to swim in. It is supplied with hot water from a spouting fountain or geyser, by a conduit over five hundred feet in length. Though

* Mallett.

more than six hundred years have passed since it was built, it is in good repair at the present day, and has been used as a temporary bathing-place by some modern travellers.

After a period of unexampled prosperity, Snorri began to experience the frowns of fortune. His avarice, ambition, and turbulent disposition, made him unpopular at home, and embroiled him in quarrels with neighbouring chiefs and rulers. Gissur Thorvaldsen, formerly his son-in-law, was ordered by Hacon, king of Norway, to make him a prisoner, and bring him before the king; and if he could not take him alive, to bring him dead. Having an eye to his estates, Thorvaldsen, assassinated him, on the night of the 22nd of September, 1241, and immediately took possession of his property. Snorri fell in the sixty-third year of his age. A letter in the Runic character was sent to him, a few hours before his death, warning him of his danger; but we are told, notwithstanding his great learning and extensive acquaintance with the antiquities and literature of the country, that he could not decipher it. In addition to his poetical and other works, he was author and compiler of the HEIMSKRINGLA, or "Chronicle of the Kings of Norway," a historical work of great interest and celebrity.

A bare recital of the titles of the different poems forming the Eddas, would be of little interest. One was entitled the VÖLUSPA —*Völo-spá, The Song of the Prophetess.* Another is the *Hávamál,** and contains a complete code of Odinic morality; and, as will be seen by the following extracts, translated by Bishop Percy, many of them are worthy of a christian age and a christian people. We will close this chapter, and our account of the Literature and Mythology of the early Icelanders, by the following quotations from the Old Eddaic poem, the HAVAMAL:

* *Mál*, song, discourse, speech, a word cognate with the Anglo-Saxon *mal, mæl*, the Greek μέλος, &c. Háva-mál signifies the discourse or canticle of the sublime; *i. e.*, deity. Odin himself was supposed to have given these precepts of wisdom to mankind.

1. Consider and examine well all your doors before you venture to stir abroad; for he is exposed to continual danger whose enemies lie in ambush, concealed in his court.

3. To the guest who enters your dwelling with frozen knees, give the warmth of your fire; he who hath travelled over the mountains, hath need of food and well-dried garments.

4. Offer water to him who sits down at your table; for he hath occasion to cleanse his hands; and entertain him honourably and kindly, if you would win from him friendly words, and a grateful return.

5. He who travelleth hath need of wisdom. One may do at home whatsoever one will; but he who is ignorant of good manners, will only draw contempt upon himself when he comes to sit down with men well instructed.

7. He who goes to a feast where he is not expected, either speaks with a lowly voice, or is silent; he listens with his ears, and is attentive with his eyes; by this he acquires knowledge and wisdom.

8. Happy he who draws upon himself the applause and benevolence of men! for whatever depends upon the will of others, is hazardous and uncertain.

10. A man can carry with him no better provision for his journey, than the strength of understanding. In a foreign country, this will be of more use to him than treasures; and will introduce him to the table of strangers.

12, 13. A man cannot carry a worse custom with him to a banquet, than that of drinking too much; the more the drunkard swallows the less is his wisdom, till he loses his reason. The bird of oblivion sings before those who inebriate themselves, and steals away their souls.

16. A coward thinks he shall live for ever, if he can but keep out of the reach of arms; but though he should escape every weapon, old age, that spares none, will give him no quarter.

17. The gluttonous man, if he is not upon his guard, eats his

own death; and the gluttony of a fool makes the wise man laugh.

21. The flocks know when to return to the fold, and to quit the pasture; but the worthless and the slothful know not how to restrain their gluttony.

22. The lewd and dissolute man makes a mock of every thing; not considering how much he himself is the object of derision. No one ought to laugh at another until he is free from faults himself.

23. A man void of sense ponders all night long, and his mind wanders without ceasing; but when he is weary at the point of day, he is nothing wiser than he was over night.

32. Many are thought to be knit in the ties of sincere kindness; but when it comes to the proof, how much are they deceived! Slander is the common vice of the age. Even the host backbites his guest.

37. One's own home is the best home, though never so small. Every thing one eats at home is sweet. He who lives at another man's table, is often obliged to wrong his palate.

41. Let friends pleasure each other reciprocally with presents of arms and habits. Those who give and those who receive, continue a long time friends, and often give feasts to each other.

43. Love both your friends and your friends' friends; but do not favour the friend of your enemies.

45. Hast thou a friend whom thou canst not well trust, but wouldst make him useful to thee; speak to him with bland words, but think craftily, and thus render him levity for lies.

47. When I was young, I wandered about alone; I thought myself rich if I chanced to light upon a companion. A man gives pleasure to another man.

51. Peace, among the perfidious, continues for five nights to shine bright as a flame; but when the sixth night approaches, the flame waxes dim, and is quite extinguished; then all their amity turns to hatred.

55. Let not a man be over wise; neither let him be more curious than he ought. Let him not seek to know his destiny, if he would sleep secure and quiet.

67. They invite me up and down to feast, if I have only need of a slight breakfast: my faithful friend is he who will give me one loaf when he has but two.

70. Whilst we live, let us live well; for be a man never so rich when he lights his fire, death may perhaps enter his door before it be burnt out.

72. It is better to have a son late than never. One seldom sees sepulchral stones raised over the graves of the dead by any other hands but those of their own offspring.

77. Riches pass away like the twinkling of an eye; of all friends, they are the most inconstant. Flocks perish; relations die; friends are not immortal; you will die yourself; but I know one thing alone that is out of the reach of fate; and that is the judgment which is passed upon the dead.

81. Praise the fineness of the day when it is ended; praise a woman when she is buried; a sword when you have proved it; a maiden after she is married; the ice when once you have crossed it; and the liquor after it is drunk.

84. Trust not to the words of a girl, neither to those which a woman utters; for their hearts have been made like the wheel that turns round; levity was put into their bosoms.

86, 87. Trust not to the ice of one day's freezing; neither to the serpent that lies asleep; nor to the caresses of her you are going to marry; nor to a sword that is cracked or broken; nor to the son of a powerful man; nor to a field that is newly sown.

90. Peace between malicious women is compared to a horse that is made to walk over the ice, not properly shod; or to a vessel in a storm without a rudder; or to a lame man who should attempt to follow the mountain goats with a young foal, or yearling mule.

92. He who would make himself beloved by a maiden, must entertain her with fine discourses, and offer her engaging presents; he must also incessantly praise her beauty. It requires good sense to be a skilful lover.

95. The heart alone knows what passes within the heart, and that which betrays the soul, is the soul itself. There is no malady or sickness more severe than not to be content with one's lot.

119. Never discover your uneasiness to an evil person, for he will afford you no comfort.

121. Know that if you have a friend, you ought to visit him often. The road is grown over with grass, the bushes quickly spread over it, if it is not constantly travelled.

123. Be not the first to break with your friend. Sorrow gnaws the heart of him who has no one to advise with but himself.

130. I advise you to be circumspect, but not too much: be so, however, when you have drunk to excess, when you are near the wife of another, and when you find yourself among robbers.

131. Do not accustom yourselves to mocking; neither laugh at your guest nor a stranger: they who remain at home often know not who the stranger is that cometh to their gate.

136. Laugh not at the grey-headed declaimer, nor at the aged grandsire. There often come forth from the wrinkles of the skin, words full of wisdom.

140. The fire drives away diseases; Runic characters destroy the effect of imprecations; the earth swallows up inundations; and death extinguishes hatred and quarrels.

CHAPTER XXVI.

———"Litera scripta manet,"
The poet saith. Pray let me show my vanit-
Y, and have "a foreign slipslop now and then,
If but to prove I've travell'd; and what's travel,
Unless it teaches one to quote and cavil?"

THE modern literature of the Icelanders is of quite a different character from that in heathen times, and in the early history of the country, from the tenth to the sixteenth century. They seem as much devoted to poetry as their ancestors, and their style of versification is similar; but they court the muse in a different strain. The poetry of the modern Icelanders does not abound in mythology, hyperbole, and fable; and it may reasonably be supposed that works of imagination have lost something of the hue of romance that is thrown around the productions of a heroic age. The works of foreign authors—translations from eminent Christian poets, in Norway, Germany, England, and the United States, are favourite studies of the modern Icelanders; and works of this description are among the most popular published in the country.

Among the original writers and translators of the present century, none rank as high as Jon Thorlakson. Receiving a scanty salary of less than fifty dollars a year, as parish priest of Bægisa, and labouring hard as a farmer, he yet found time to translate from English and German writers, and to compose original poetry, to the extent of several octavo volumes. About the

year 1818, his case attracted the attention of a learned society in London, and a sum of money was forwarded to him to smooth his declining years; but he survived only till 1821, being over seventy years of age at the time of his death. His translation of Milton was published in Icelandic, in 1828. The "Essay on Man," and a volume of origiual poetry of great merit, were published in 1842. Among his original poems are two versions of the story of Inkle and Yarico.

The style of versification in vogue among the early Icelandic writers was very peculiar. Its harmony was dependent, not so much on rhyme and the number of syllables in a line, as upon peculiar alliterations. Their language abounding in consonants, this seemed easier than rhymes, which were seldom used. Some of their kinds of verse had regular alliterations at the commencement of the lines; other varieties, just so many alliterations in a line, or alliterations in a similar position in certain words of corresponding lines. The following is a very good example. It is from an "Address to the New Year," or, more literally, "The Sight of the New Year."

NYARS VISUR.

Verði blíðda veðurs!
Viðir blómgi hliðar!
Veiðist vel á miðum!
Vaxi gengdin laxa!
Glitri grund og flötur!
Groi tun og floi!
Neytist afl til nota!
Nytist allt til hlitar!

How ingenious and regular are the alliterations! This is from a poem, written in 1847. During the present century, rhymes have been gaining in favour greatly. A longer metre and more perfect rhythm is also cultivated. The old verse, and much of the more modern, is a very short metre, which, to us, does not seem as poetical as a more stately and majestic tread. Formerly, and sometimes at the present day, verse was printed without

capitals, except at the commencement of a stanza. Let us see how old John Milton looks in an Icelandic dress; and how Mr. Thorlakson sings—

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world and all our woe.

Um fyrsta manns
felda hlýðni
ok átlystíng
af epli forboðnu,
hvaðan óvægr
upp kom dauði,
Edens missir,
ok allt böl manna;
  þartil annarr einn,
æðri maðr,
aptr fær
oss viðreista,
ok afrekar nýan
oss til handa
fullsælustað
fögrum sigri;
  Sýng þú, Menta-
móðir hymneska!
þú sem Hórebs fyrr
á huldum toppi,
eða Sínaí,
sauðaverði
innblèst fræðanda
útvalit sæði,
hve alheimr skópst
af alls samblandi;
  Eða lysti þik
lángtum heldr
at Zions hæð
ok Sílóa brunni,
sem framstreymdi
hjá Frètt guðligri!

We can barely recognize the "heavenly Muse"—Mentamothir hymneska"—Mother of hymns!—

——"that, on the secret top
Of Oreh, or of Sinai, did'st inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed,
In the beginning, how Heaven and Earth
Rose out of chaos."

Thorlakson's version of Pope's great Essay is a later translation, and probably a better one. It is longer metre, is all in rhyme, and more in accordance with the structure of English verse.* Here is a selection from the fourth epistle of the Essay, with the translation:—

But, by your fathers' worth, if yours you rate,
Count me those only who were good and great.
Go! if your ancient but ignoble blood
Has crept through scoundrels ever since the flood,
Go! and pretend your family is young;
Nor own your fathers have been fools so long.
What can ennoble sots, or slaves, or cowards?—
Alas! not all the blood of all the Howards.

Mr. Thorlakson gives it in this style:—

En sè yðvart hið aldna hólð
i ótèrligum runnið straum
þartil nu siðian Nóa flóð,
narra-registar gegnum aum,
segið þá heldur yðar ætt
unga; látið ei heyra neinn
að sèr hafi svo lengi lædt
i legg þeim dáraskapur einn!
Hvað skarn-þræl, narra, skelmskum hal,
skapa kann aðals-mæti góð?
ei heilar ættar tallaust tal
til vinnst, ei gjörvalt Hovarðs blóð.

One of the finest specimens of Icelandic poetry, is a translation of Bruce's Address to his Army, which I have subjoined. It shows the flexibility of the Icelandic language in a striking light; the piece preserving the exact number of stanzas, the same number of lines to a stanza, and rhymes precisely like the song of Burns, so that in the Icelandic version it can be sung to the same air.

* A sample is given at the head of Chapter IV., page 36, of this volume.

BANNOCKBURN.

AVARP ROBERT BRUCE TIL HERLITHS SINS.—EPTIR BURNS.

Skotar, er Wallace vörðust með,
Víg með Bruce opt hafið sjeð;
Velkomnir að hlóðgum heð,
Bjartri eða sigurfrægð!

Stund og dagur dýr nú er;
Dauðinn ógnar hvar sem sjer;
Játvarðs að oss æðir her—
Ok og hlekkja nægð!

Hverr vill bera níðings nafn?
Ná hver hleyðu seðja hrafn?
Falla þræl ófrjálsum jafn?
Flýti hann hurtu sjer!

Hverr vill hlinur Hildar háls
Hjör nú draga hins góða máls,
Standa bæði og falla frjáls?
Fari haun eptir mjer!

Ánauðar við eymd og gröndl
Yðar sona þrældóms böndl
Vjer viljum láta líf og öndl,
En leysa úr hlekkjum þá!

Fellið grimma fjendur því!
Frelsi er hverju höggi í!
Sjái oss hrósa sgiri ný
Sol, eða orðna að ná!

We give the original, so that they may be readily compared.

BANNOCKBURN.

ROBERT BRUCE'S ADDRESS TO HIS ARMY.

Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled!
Scots wham Bruce has aften led!
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to victory.

Now's the day and now's the hour;
See the front o' battle lour;
See approach proud Edward's power—
Chains and slavery!

Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as he a slave?
Let him turn and flee!

Wha for Scotland's king and law,
Freedom's sword will strongly draw?
Freeman stand, or freeman fa',
Let him follow me!

By oppression's woes and pains!
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free.

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us do or die!

These examples, though but *disjecta membra poetæ*, are sufficient to show something of the structure and appearance of Icelandic poetry; and probably, to the general reader, as interesting as a dissertation that would fill a volume.

One more specimen, however, of their verse, shall be given; a couple of stanzas of a very popular Icelandic hymn. It is entitled, "The weeping of Jacob over Rachel," or,

GRÁTUR JACOBS YFIR RAKEL.

Hvert er farin hin fagra og hlíða?
Fórstu Rakel í svipanna heim?
Fyrir sunnu sje jeg nú líða
Svarta flóka og dimmir í geim.
Rakel! Rakel! daprast nú dagar,
Dvín mjer gleði, brátt enda mun líf;
Leiðir eru mjer ljósgrænir hagar—
Liggur í moldu hið ástkæra víf.

Drottinn Abrahams! deyr nú minn rómur,
Dauðans skuggi í hjarta mjer er;
Drottinn Abrahams! auður og tómur
Er nú heimur og dagsbirta þver;
Drottinn Ahrahams! harn þitt sjá hifa!
Blóðug falla tár þess á mund;
Drottinn Ahrahams! lát mig el lifa!—
Liggur í moldu hið harmdauða sprund.

We will now have a specimen of Icelandic prose. See how queer our good old plain philosopher Franklin looks in a Northern dress. Here is his "Story of a Whistle."

HLJÓTHPÍPAN.

EPTIR DR. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

Sönn saga—skrifuð frænda hans ungum.

Það bar til einhvern helgidag þegar eg var eitthvað sjö vetra gamall, að kunningjar mínir fylltn vasa mína koparskildingum. Jeg gekk þá strax beina leið til húdar þar sem harnagull vorn seld; en á leiðinni mætti jeg dreng, sem hjelt á *hljóðpípu*, og þótti mjer svo fallegt hljóðið í henni, að jeg bauð honum af fyrra hragði allt fje mitt fyrir hana. Síðan fór eg heim og gekk um öll hús hlásandi á *hljóðpípuna* mína, og var hinn kátasti þó eg gjörði öllnm heimamönnum ónæði. Bræður mínir, systur, og frændur komust hrátt að um kaupskap minn, og sögðu mjer þá að eg hefði gefið fjórum sinnum meira fyrir pípuna enn hún væri verð. Þá fór eg að hugsa um hvað marga góða gripi eg hefði getað eignast fyrir það, sem eptir hefði mátt vertða af skildingum minum; og þau hlóu svo lengi að heimsku minni, að jeg grjet af gremju, og umhugsanin um þetta hriggði mig meira enn *hljóðpípan* gladdi mig.

Þetta atvik kom mjer þó síðan til nota, því áhrifin urðu eptir í sál minni; og opt, þegar freistni kom að mjer að kaupe einhvern óþarfann, sagði eg við sjálfan mig, *gefðu ei of mikið fyrir hlóðjpípuna;* og með því móti hjelt eg fje minu.

Þegar eg óx upp, komst út í heiminn, og fór að taka eptir breitni manna, þá fannst mjer svo sem eg hitti marga, mjög marga, sem *gáfu of mikið fyrir hljóðpípuna.*

Þegar eg sá mann, af eintómri eptirsókn eptir hylli konunga, eyða aldri sínum í því að híða eptir hentngleikum þeirra, fórna næði sínn, frelsi, dygð og jafnvel vinnm sínum, til að ná henni, þá sagði jeg við sjálfan mig, *þessi maður gefur of mikið fyrir hljóðpípu sína.*

Þegar eg sá annan mann láta mikið af alþýðu hylli, og verja stundum sínum til að kvetja menn til óspekta, en sjálfum sjer til óhætanlegs skaða vanrækja efni sín; *hann gefur sannarlega,* sagði eg þá, *of mikið fyrir hljóðpípu sína.*

Ef eg sje einhvern armingja, sem einasta til þess að geta hrúgað saman auðæfum, afneitar sjer um alla þægilegleika lífsins, alla þá ánægju, sem í því er að gjöra vel við aðra, alla virðingu segi eg þa, *þjer gefið vissulega of mikið fyrir hljóðpípu yðar.*

Þegar eg mæti gleðimandi, sem fórnar hverju tækifært til að auðga sál sína eða hæta hag sinn á lofsverðan hátt, og það vegna eintómrar holdlegrar nautnar: *óláns-maður,* segi eg þá, *þjer bakið yður böl en ei gleði: djer gefið of mikið fyrir hljóðpípu yðar.*

Sjái jeg mann af tómri hjegómadýrð sækjast eptir dýrindis fötum, hússgögnum

og öðrum úthunaði, allt meira enn efni hans leyfa, safna fyrir þá sök skuldum og lenda loks í díflissu; *æ*, segi eg þá, *hann hefur drýkeypt, mjög drýkeypt hljóðpípu sína.*

þegar eg sje fagra, hlíðlynda meyju, gefna illum og hroðalegum svola; *mikil hörmung er það*, segi eg þá, *að hún skuli hafa gefið svona mikið fyrir eina hljóðpípu.*

I stuttu máli, eg komst að raun um að mikill hluti af eydnm manna kemur af því að þeir meta ranglega gildi hlnta, og gefa of mikið fyrir *hljóðpípur* sínar.

For "Story of a Whistle," the Iceland translator gives as the heading of this article, "*Hljóthpípan*"—"The Lay of the Pipe." These extracts from Icelandic literature are undoubtedly very interesting! If not so readily perused as our English, they at least show the literary taste of the Icelanders, and something of the variety and style of their composition. Here is an extract from a newspaper published in Reykjavik a few days after I left; a copy of which I received by mail after arriving in New York.

From the þjoðolfur * of Aug. 20, 1852.

Eptirfylgjandi GREIN hað ferðamaðurinn herra PLINY MILES rektor herra BJARNA JÓNSSON að láta prenta í þjoðólfi, og senda honum svo til Vestnrheims.

Herra *Pliny Miles*, Vesturheimsmaður og meðlimur Sagnafjelagsins Nýju Jórvik, hefur um hríð dvalið á Islandi og farið víða um hjeröð landsins. Hann hefur skoðað *Geisir*, litla *Geisir*, brennisteinnámurnar í *Krisivik*, og han kom up á tindinn á *Heklu*. Herra *Miles* hefur skoðað og aðætt nokkrar bækur landsins, og hefur hann haft heim með sjer til Vesturheims nokkrar íslenzkar hækur. Stiptsbókasafnið hefunr sent böggul af hóknm þjóðbókasafni Vestnrheims, er *Smithson* er höfundur að, til eudnrgjalds fyrir dýrar hækur, er stiptsbókasafnið hafði nýlega fengið frá hókasafni *Smithsons*. Herra *Miles* siglir á póstskipinu til meginlands Norðurálfnnnar, og tjáir hann sig mikillega ánægðan me ðallt, sem hann hefur sjeð út á Islandi.

A translation of this is scarcely required, as its purport can be readily seen. It is a short article written by Mr. Bjarni Johnson, for the THIOTHOLFUR, and giving an account of the author's visit to Iceland.

In the Icelandic, whole sentences from other languages are

* "The Statesman."

thrown into one word. The word *Vesturheimsmathur*, fully translated, is *a man who has his home on the western continent.* It goes on to speak of this native of the West, as a member of the New York Historical Society—"Sagnafjelagsins"—and that, during a somewhat rainy period, he visited Iceland, travelled through the interior of the country, went to the Geyser, the little Geyser, the Sulphur Mountains—"brennisteinnàmurnar"—of Krisuvik, and climbed to the top of Hekla. It speaks of the visit as a pleasant one, and that on the return of the traveller to America—"Vesturheims"—he took some books from the Iceland public library—"stiptsbókasafnith"—as a present to the American Smithsonian library, in return for a similar present formerly received from Smithson's. Then he journeyed on the mail packet—"póstskipinu"—to the continent of Europe, after a long tour and an agreeable stay in Iceland.

This shall close our extracts. Lest some may think that the writer of this volume is an enthusiast, and overrates the value of Icelandic literature, the following statement is quoted from the preface to the English translation of Rask's Icelandic Grammar, by Hon. George P. Marsh, and shows the high estimate formed of the language and literature of the Northmen, by this eminent linguist :—

"The translator cannot here enter upon so copious a subject as the character and value of the literature of Iceland; and it must suffice to remark, that in the opinion of those most competent to judge, it has never been surpassed, if equalled, in all that gives value to that portion of history which consists of spirited delineations of character, and faithful and lively pictures of events among nations in a rude state of society.

"That the study of the Old-Northern tongue may have an important bearing on English grammar and etymology, will be obvious, when it is known that the Icelandic is most closely allied to the Anglo-Saxon, of which so few monuments are extant; and a slight examination of its structure, and remarkable syntactical character, will satisfy the reader, that it may well deserve the attention of the philologist."

CHAPTER XXVII.

MATTERS PERSONAL, LITERARY, AND GENERAL.

THE Icelanders, as I have pictured them, are intellectual in their tastes; and in domestic life they are highly social. Their amusements are few, their enjoyments being principally in the family, at their labour, and attending public worship. Throughout the country, they gather from a circuit of many miles, to hear their ministers proclaim "glad tidings," and tell them of the reward that awaits a well-spent life. In the long winter evenings, one member of the family reads aloud, while the others are engaged in domestic duties, spinning, weaving, knitting, and making clothing and domestic utensils, in which the males as well as the females all engage. In their personal demeanour, the Icelanders are generally quiet, sober, and somewhat taciturn; though some of them that I have seen, have had a great deal of vivacity, and large conversational powers. A love of amusement, and fondness for sport, is not common. Some that have visited foreign countries, have returned home so impressed with their experience of the great and busy world, that they have infused a spirit of activity and inquiry into the whole circle where they move. They tell of one man, an Icelander, who got off to the continent, and went through all the wars of Napoleon, and after many years returned to his native land. He was so glad to see his own good island, that he fell down and embraced the soil, and declared, in the words of the national proverb, "Iceland is the best country the sun shines upon."*

* "*Island er hinn besta land, sem solinn skinnar uppá.*"

With all that the poor soldier had seen of the luxury and variety of foreign countries, there was, to him, "no place like home." When the Icelander is fond of conversation, in the presence of strangers he rather listens than talks. They come well up to Dr. Johnson's favourite character, a good listener. When a foreigner calls at the house of an Icelander, he attends first to the personal wants of his guest; then he is desirous of learning all the stranger has to communicate. He is shrewd and inquisitive, and asks the most pertinent and ingenious questions, and never rests satisfied till he has learned with great minuteness all that the stranger has to tell him respecting the great world, and the foreign countries he has seen. He is always most respectful and obliging, and ready to communicate information, and answer questions about every thing relating to his country or pursuits. He seems to appreciate the greater amount of wealth and luxury abroad, and the superior magnificence and splendour of cities like Copenhagen, Paris, London, or New York, as compared to his own small towns; yet his *amor patriæ* and contentment make him superior to all temptations to emigrate. His industry, fondness for reading and conversing, his great integrity of character, a devotional spirit, and ardent love for the precepts and practices of Christianity—these, with his contentment and love of liberty, are the most prominent characteristics of the Icelander. They do not show much fondness for exact science, though they pay some attention to the studies of geography and natural history. Having no fuel but turf—except what is imported—none of the precious or useful metals, no material, except wool, for the manufacture of textile fabrics, raising no fruits or grain, and having little use for water or steam-power, they have few incentives to exert themselves in acquiring a knowledge of chemistry, mineralogy, geology, electricity, magnetism, hydraulics, pneumatics, or many of the mechanic and useful arts. "Circumstances make men," or bring out certain traits of character; and the Icelandic forms no ex-

ception to the general rule. We see how he is placed. Obtaining his subsistence from the products of the earth and the sea, engaged little in traffic, he does not experience much of the fraud and wrong that is found in the busy haunts of men; and in him we see little but the gentle and better characteristics of our nature.

The Icelander is poor, and books are to him a luxury; yet he possesses more, in proportion to his means, than the natives of any other country. We shall see by comparison, and looking at facts, what their intellectual resources are. The number of books, of all sizes, published in Iceland in each of the years 1847 and 1848, was seventeen—thirty-four volumes in two years; and these for a community of 60,000 people. Were there as many in proportion printed for our population of twenty-five millions, the number of books—distinct works independent of periodicals—published annually in the United States, would be over seven thousand. Most of the Iceland books are duodecimos and octavos; the largest volume for the year 1847 contained 928 pages. This was a sort of "Congressional Globe," though not issued in numbers—a record of the proceedings of their Althing or Congress.* This seems like a pretty lengthy journal of a session that lasted but little over a month. They passed a number of acts of much importance to the people; and very likely the session was enlivened with as many "speeches to Buncombe," as we hear in the same length of time on Capitol Hill.

Some of the works published in Icelandic, are issued from the press in Copenhagen; but the majority of them are printed and bound in Iceland. They have several printing-presses constantly at work, and three newspapers—one issued once a week, and two once a fortnight. In mechanical execution, their books and newspapers are turned out in better style than the average of those issued from the American press. They are, however, always without illustrations.

* "Tiðindi frà Alþingi. Annað þing, 1 Juli til 7 Agust 1847."

From what has been said, it will be seen that the Icelanders of the present day are a different people from those of an earlier period. In former times, the tyranny of rulers, and the ambition of demagogues, kept up a warlike spirit, and an ardent love of political liberty. While they were less amiable and peaceful, they showed both in letters and politics a greater degree of activity. Lest it may be thought that I have drawn too favourable a picture of the early Icelanders, I will here give an extract from a learned dissertation on the history and literature of Iceland, by the distinguished Dr. (now Sir Henry) Holland, who visited the country in 1810, in company with Sir George Mackenzie :—

"Like the aurora borealis of their native sky, the poets and historians of Iceland not only illuminated their own country, but flashed the lights of their genius through the night which then hung over the rest of Europe. Commerce was pursued by the inhabitants with ardour and success; and they partook of the maritime adventures of discovery and colonization, which gave so much merited celebrity to the Norwegians of this period. Of the several features which distinguish this remarkable period in the history of Iceland, the literary character of the people is doubtless the most extraordinary and peculiar. We require much evidence to convince us of the fact that a nation remote from the rest of Europe, dwelling on a soil so sterile, and beneath such inclement skies, should have sent forth men whose genius, taste, and acquirements did honour to their country, and to the times in which they lived. Such evidence, however, of the most distinct and decisive kind, we possess in the many writings which have come down from this period to the present age, and in the testimonies afforded by the contemporaneous writers of other countries. The reality of the fact, indeed, can admit of no doubt; and it is only left for us to speculate upon the causes which led to this singular anomaly in the history of literature." *

The above was written forty years ago, and by one of the most intelligent travellers that ever visited Iceland.

I was asked by the Icelanders, if it would not be an object for some of my countrymen to settle in Iceland, and teach them the practical and productive arts as understood in my country. I told them, I did not think it would be an object for the natives

* From "Mackenzie's Iceland;" "Preliminary Dissertation" on the Literature and History of the country, by Dr. Henry Holland.

of any country I knew to go and settle there. The restrictive laws of Denmark do not favour trade with foreigners; the country produces too little variety, and too small quantities of suitable articles for exportation, to create a trade of much magnitude. The greater part of their soil is entirely unproductive; and the balance produces too little ever to support a numerous population. The articles they have are good of the kind; they raise excellent beef and mutton; the wool of their sheep is soft and durable, but not fine or handsome. It is not so good for first class manufactures, as the sheep are often pied, spotted, and variegated in colour; and it is not so good for colouring, as they always pull it off of the animals, instead of shearing it.* Fish—salmon and cod—are important articles of export; and their horses, though small, are very desirable animals. A little larger than the Shetland pony, often of singular colour, hardy, gentle, and docile; for pony carriages, and for children and females to ride, I think they would be a desirable addition to our stock of horses in the United States. A schooner-load of them went from Iceland to Scotland, when I was in the country; and I have no doubt they sold at a good profit, as the average cost was less than ten dollars a head. As these animals are never fed in winter, they are necessarily raised very cheaply; and, were trade open with foreign countries, I have no doubt a great demand would spring up for them, and add largely to the profits of the Iceland farmer. Apropos of this subject of free trade, I will here give an extract from the letter of an intelligent Icelander, which I have just received, and which was written after the commencement of hostilities in Europe. There is no reason why the king of Denmark should not open the trade of Iceland equally to all nations. It is not a particle of pecuniary benefit to his kingdom, as there are no duties charged; but, by restrict-

* This may be thought barbarous and cruel; but probably it is not; for it is pulled at two or three different times, and only that portion pulled off that comes easy. Then perhaps, too, custom is something, like the adage of the eels, &c.

ing the trade to Danish vessels, it is kept as a kind of monopoly by a few merchants of Copenhagen; while the poor Icelanders complain greatly of the oppression and hardship of being dependent for their foreign necessaries and luxuries, entirely on a few grasping speculators. Whenever the Iceland Althing passes an act opening their ports to all nations, the king vetoes the bill. They murmur at it as great injustice; but what avail the murmurs of the weak? During the last war in Europe—1810-12—Denmark nearly lost the colony in two different ways. One was, the enemy nearly taking possession; and another escape they had, (the "mother country" not being able to protect the island, or send them supplies,) the people were almost starved to death, and were only saved from the greatest destitution by the clemency and liberality of Great Britain, in treating the Icelanders as "friends," while the country was at war with Denmark. If his Danish Majesty should feel compelled to take up arms in the present struggle, the island would be in similar peril. Respecting this, and some other subjects, the following letter from a learned Icelander—the President of the Iceland College—will be read with interest:—

"*Reykjavik, March* 1, 1854.

"SIR,—

* * * * * * * *

"As to political news, I have not much to relate; nor, I am sure, do you expect much from this quarter; yet, a change is about to take place in our commercial relations. In all probability, the Danish government will, after a monopoly of two and a half centuries, at length, this year, condescend to allow of our free intercourse, for mercantile purposes, with all nations. It would be superfluous to write you any thing about the impending war; but I cannot forbear stating, that in case of war between England and Russia, to which Denmark would probably be constrained to become a party, our situation here, in this island, would needs become very precarious. * * * * * * * * *

"Sir, I should be charmed to visit your stately country, to get an idea of her soaring aspirations, to view her wonders of civilisation, with all her rapid improvements. She seems to be the only country that at present enjoys the blessings of freedom, and on whose soil liberty can prosper. But I very much fear my

desire of paying a visit there will ever remain a '*pium votum*,' which neither my financial circumstances nor my occupation will allow of. * * * *

* * Though you have, dear sir, already rendered me so many important services, I must, before concluding this letter, once more importune you with a boon, which is in the interest of my college, to procure me a copy of the following work, a most excellent one, by one of your countrymen—'Report on Education in Europe to the Trustees of the Girard College for Orphans, by Alex. Dallas Bache, Philadelphia, 1839.' I have made several applications to my bookseller in Copenhagen, but all in vain. Then, I should feel much obliged to you, if you could procure me, by the means of your influential friends in America and Great Britain, some examination papers from some of your colleges or schools of England, especially from Eton, Harrow, or Winchester, containing the questions put to the pupils, as well as copies of the best answers to them; together with specimens of their exercises in Latin and Greek. If you could comply with this desire of mine, you would render yourself one of the benefactors of our college. I could send the expense to Mr. Younghushand, your correspondent in Liverpool.—I remain, sir, your faithful and obliged friend,

"BJARNI JOHNSON.

"To PLINY MILES, Esq.,
Washington."

A man who can write thus, who can so express himself in English, does not belong to a community of people who are entirely ignorant of the world at large, or indifferent to the national, political, and educational movements of the powerful nations of the earth. If the Danish government should open the ports of Iceland to all nations, it would be in accordance with the advanced and progressive spirit of the age, and, while conferring a great benefit on a quiet, peaceful, and isolated colony, it would knit more closely the ties of affection and union between the colonists and the parent country. Then we might chronicle the arrival and departure of vessels, *a little oftener*, between the northern isle of the ocean and our own seaports.

Last year, a ship bearing the classic name of the "SAGA,"*

* A vessel—the "BALDAUR," as it was printed in the newspapers—seems to have derived its name from Northern Mythology—"Baldur, the Fair." This ship was spoken of as having sailed near a steamer on the track of the missing "*Glasgow*." Now and then, it seems, a name, or maritime event, connects us with the far north.

sailed into the harbour of New-York, direct from Iceland, *being the first arrival from that country to this, in a period of more than eight hundred years!* I think the maritime records of the world would be searched in vain for a parallel case. The crew of the ship were the "followers" of Eric the Red and his compeers, who discovered the American continent, and gave it the name of Vinland; but they were certainly a long time in following him.*

* Since the above was in type, intelligence has arrived from Denmark, that a law has just been passed, throwing open the ports of Iceland to the trade of the world. For this, none will rejoice more than the Icelanders themselves; for a more relentless, grinding, and hated monopoly never oppressed a poor people. The resident Danish merchants will now not be able to have every thing their own way. As the law takes effect in April, 1855, a trade between Iceland and England, and Iceland and America, will soon spring up. The articles that the Icelanders most require from foreign countries, and the productions of the island which they have to export, will be found enumerated in preceding chapters.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RAMBLES BROUGHT TO A CLOSE—EMBARKATION.

THOUGH this little book was not written for the Iceland market, I cannot help making one or two remarks respecting their own internal affairs. Most undoubtedly they have learned more from experience than a foreigner from a hasty visit could teach them, but I believe they do not appreciate the productiveness and value of their soil. Scanty as are the agricultural resources of Iceland, and short as their seasons are, I am confident that this "art of arts" might be greatly advanced here. Ploughing would certainly, in many places, greatly improve their land, smooth the surface, and enable them to lay it down with a better quality of grass. Their seed would, the most of it, however, have to be brought from foreign countries. On seeing their fine meadows of "red top"—the kind of grass most prevalent—I at once told them that the white, if not the red clover, would be much more productive than their native grasses. Afterwards, I saw many farms in the valleys of the Laxá and the Thiorsá rivers, that were well seeded with white clover; and, as it was the haying season, I could see that these farms yielded about double the hay that other farms did, where there was no clover. The clover had once been sown, and then it had propagated itself. I believe many of the more favourably located farms could be made to produce barley and oats, if the land were properly prepared. These grains are raised in Orkney, Shetland, and the Faroe Isles; and the latter group is but little south of Iceland. Nothing would do, however, without ploughing; and

in Iceland never a horse wore harness yet, so it would take a little time to get such a business started. If the governor of Iceland were a thoroughly practical man, he could do much towards introducing these and other improvements. A good opening place for the plough would be the "public square" in Reykjavik, about two acres of irregular grass; that once broken up, and levelled, and seeded down to white clover, would make a beautiful village green. If they had ploughs, they would make larger gardens than they now do with the spade, and more table vegetables would be raised. This would be conducive to the health and comfort of the people, and would probably in time, if not entirely eradicate, at least greatly reduce, the diseases of the skin, and that terrible plague, the leprosy; both of which are somewhat common, and undoubtedly produced, or greatly aggravated, by living to a great extent on animal food.

The Icelanders, like all other ancient people, are extremely attached to their own customs, and averse to innovation. I noticed one thing here, that—though, as Captain Cuttle would say, there was not much wisdom in it—is characteristic of every people under the sun. While fond of every foreign article, particularly of ornament, they almost entirely neglected the native productions. With great pains and trouble, they would rear in their houses, geraniums, roses, fuschias, violets, and other exotics, and yet neglect to plant one single native flower. The beautiful and fragrant heath, common over much of Iceland, does not grow within several miles of Reykjavik; and yet not one single resident had planted by his dwelling a stalk of this elegant little shrub, to bloom and give out perpetual fragrance. I saw, also, beautiful annual flowers growing wild in the fields, and on the river banks, but which were never cultivated. Sir George Mackenzie has given a list of the Iceland Flora, and a pretty long catalogue it is.

I believe a carriage road could be made in some places, particularly between Reykjavik and Hafnarfiorth; but then it might

not pay to attempt to make many carriage roads, and introduce wheeled vehicles in Iceland. If the land was levelled and seeded down, and bogs and wet places drained, and converted into dry, productive meadows, I believe it would be an object for the larger farmers to have carts to draw their hay on, rather than carry it in bundles on the backs of men or horses. Then, too, if their meadows were smooth the product would be much greater, and they would be able to introduce a much larger scythe than the little two-foot knife-blade used there at present. With the improvement of their land, their tools could be greatly improved. The population of Iceland has been stated at 60,000 souls, and probably the increase is not one and a half per cent. annually. Women, as well as men, work in the fields during the hay season; but, in fishing, the men only are engaged. The exposure attendant on this latter business gives many complaints of the lungs; and probably more die of consumption than of any other disease. The plague, about 500 years ago, visited Iceland; but cholera and yellow fever have never been here. There are but few physicians in the country, and the distances they have to travel often make their services of no avail, Death calling on the patient before the doctor does. In countries of more luxury and refinement, Death often calls soon after the doctor! From what I learn, I should judge longevity was not as great here as in most countries in the temperate zones.

The last Sunday I was in Iceland I attended church at the Reykjavik cathedral. This is a beautiful little edifice, of brick, with a fine altar—altogether of an ornamental appearance. The sermon was in Icelandic, the service Lutheran, but much after the style of the Church of England. Three Sundays out of four I think it is, that the service in this place is in Icelandic, and every fourth Sunday in Danish. What the use may be of having any service in Danish is more than I can tell; for a more worldly, ungodly set than the Danish merchants of Iceland I never saw in a Christian country. At this place, their example has driven

nearly all religious observances away from the Icelanders. Though the day was beautiful, and but one church in the village, and all professing the same religion, and all the people, too, understanding both languages, there were not, from among the 1200 people of the place, fifty worshippers. This certainly does not accord with what I have said of the moral and religious habits of the Icelanders in general. I do not think I do the Danes injustice, when I ascribe the immorality in and around Reykjavik to their influence and example. In several villages and country places I had a good opportunity of observing, and I know that ten times a greater proportion of the people attended church than here in Reykjavik. A class like these merchants, who notoriously do nothing but traffic, make money, gamble, and drink, cannot improve the morals of a simple, pious, and intellectual people.

The people assembled at the church very quietly, and took their seats without tarrying at the door, or entering into conversation. They were all dressed neatly, and two or three females wore the ancient costume of the country. It is very picturesque, but

"Description will not suit itself in words."

I cannot do better than give another extract from the letter of President Johnson—quoted in last chapter—under date of March 1, 1854, as well as part of one written the November previous. Only a portion of the letters is given, and all of this is of a private and personal nature, intended for no eye but my own. Barring the compliments that are given, the extracts will be read with interest, both as showing the composition of an Icelander in a foreign language, and the educational, parochial, and local news communicated. Commencing his letter of March 1st, he says:—

"My Dear Sir,—

"I have to acknowledge from you the third letter since we parted—of Dec. 4th last (Washington)—together with a large parcel of books, all sent to me by the

care of your friend Mr. Younghushand, at Liverpool, who, hesides, had the kindness to write me a very friendly letter, and send me the last copies of the leading newspapers of Great Britain. Indeed, sir, I feel quite ashamed at receiving so many proofs of your friendship, without heing capahle of giving yon the least mark of my gratitude; fer all I can furnish is our little "þjoðolfur,"* a poor return for all your liherality. To this I take the liherty to add an examination paper—(Program †)—in Icelandic and Danish—of the management and teaching of our College for the year 1852, '53. * * * * I have forwarded all your presents to the persons interested that are living here in town and neighhonrhood: such as were destined for the interior of the conntry, I must kcep till the spring, all communication therewith heing impracticahle except on foot. Now I am charged with the task of hringing you their thanks, for your kindness in remembering them when you had so little to thank for. I left your direction with them, intimating that a letter from them would he much esteemed hy yon, even though written in Danish or Icelandic. And as to news concerning your acquaintances here, all is unchanged. None of the ladies yon mentioned, are married. The Misses Johnson are keeping a female school pretty successfully; the Misses Sivertsen living with their parents, and I am to tell you the compliment of their father.‡ He has delivered to me the flask you so kindly presented me with, and which I shall keep as a souvenir of yon, though rather too small for my capacious stomach! The Dean Johnson is going to leave in March, to the regret of his friends. He is to have another living in the interior of the country. Thorarensen has left the College, and yon will find his name (S. Thorarensen) as well as that of Jon Sveinson in the examination paper I send you here enclosed. Mrs. Egilson,§ Mr. Ranthrys, the Apothecary and his lady, Mr. Jon Arnason,‖ were all extremely pleased with the *N. Y. Illustrated News* you sent them. I have also to salute you from the Bishop."

In Mr. Johnson's letter of Nov. 15, 1853, he says :—

"I have to acknowledge from you the reception of two letters, the former of Sept. 24, 1852 (Glasgow), the latter of Sept. 5, this year (Washington), hoth attended with newspapers, for which I feel very much ohliged to you, as for your friendship in general. I am very glad to learn hy your latter letter, that you are returned sound and safe to your native country from your long and cheqnered journey. But I trust you will not repent the toils and hardships inseparahly connected with such a "tour" almost around the world. You will, I am sure, allow of its important

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* "þjoðolfur," the Reykjavik newspaper.

† "Efterretninger."

‡ To this excellent gentleman, Mr. Sivertsen, I am indehted for nnmerons hospitalities. Forty-two years hefore, in 1810, he entertained at his house Sir George Mackenzie and his companions.

§ Widow of Sweinborn Egilson, a poet and literary man, who died a few days after I left the country.

‖ Librarian at the puhlic library at Reykjavik.

consequences for our own mental improvement and development. Old Horace says: '*Qui multorum providus urbes et mores hominum inspexit—latumque per æquor, aspera multa pertulit adversis rerum immersabilis undis.*'

"I am very much indebted to you for the copies of newspapers you so kindly have sent to me. However, I deeply regret none of them contained your lectures upon the curiosities of this country, as in general what attracted your notice on your extensive journey. But then I console myself by your kind promise to send me a copy of your Travels in Iceland, when ready from the press. * * * * * I have to announce to you Jon Sveinson's most heartfelt thanks for your letter of introduction to your friend at Hull,* which benefited him very much during his stay there; and I feel obliged to join my thanks to his, as it was on my recommendation that you gave him the said letter. Indeed, sir, he feels very much bound in gratitude to you and your friends for all the kindness they poured on him. He has now left the College—last season—with a very honourable testimonial; and but for the cholera, that has been raging in Denmark, during the latter part of the last summer, he would have gone to the University of Copenhagen; but now, having postponed his journey thither to the next spring, he passes this winter at his father's, who is a reputed clergyman of easy circumstances in the interior of this country. Jon Sveinson's visit to Hull, has also procured me a friend there. The last summer, I had successively received some copies of English newspapers, without knowing from what quarter they came. I thought of you or some of my other friends in Great Britain; but a couple of months ago I received a letter from Mr. Archibald Kidd, Saville-street, Hull (if I decipher his name correctly), who informed me that it was to him I was indebted for the favour of the newspapers, and who asked me some information about the means of studying Icelandic literature, and the method of setting out about it. I most readily complied with his request as far as I could, and wrote him by the last post-ship for Liverpool. As he intimated to know you, I expect you to be so kind as to give me in your next letter some information about this gentleman. * * * I send you enclosed a copy of the *Thiotholfur* for the whole year 1852-53. I wish you would tell me whether I am to continue it. This I might easily do, especially in the summer time, as at that season there are frequent occasions for sending to England; whereas, in winter it is more difficult, the only ship going there being the post-ship, and my extensive official correspondence with the ministry of public instruction, seldom permitting me sufficient labour to write to my private friends.

"Now, I wish these lines may find you in good health and happiness; and I sign myself, my dear sir,

"Your very much indebted friend,

"To Mr. PLINY MILES. "BJARNI JOHNSON.

Washington."

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* Mr. Joseph W. Leng, publisher and bookseller, Saville-street, Hull; a gentleman of intelligence and high worth, to whom I am indebted for many kind attentions to myself, as well as for his favours to my young Iceland friend.

It should be stated that the great *capacity* of my friend does not consist in the appetite, so much as a certain *embonpoint*, coming, as he does, partly up to Shakspeare's description of Cardinal Wolsey—"a man of an unbounded stomach."

In closing my account of the Icelanders at Reykjavik, I have to record the pleasure and profit that I derived from the friendly attentions of these excellent people. I spent many and most pleasant hours with President Johnson, and with Mr. Sivertsen and his wife and daughters; also a most agreeable evening at the house of the Dean, the Rev. Mr. Johnson, who made a small party on my account. The young ladies in this family, as also in Mr. Sivertsen's and Mr. Ranthry's, contributed much to the agreeable socialities of my stay in Reykjavik. Were these fair daughters of the North to appear in society in England or America, a comparison to their disadvantage could not be drawn. Speaking several languages—always two or more—good players on the pianoforte and the guitar, skilled also in vocal music; and to these accomplishments add a knowledge of household duties, and I fear that many of the graduates of our female boarding-schools could not successfully come into competition with them. I also partook of the hospitalities of their most excellent bishop, who lives a little way out of town, on a pleasant part of the coast, opposite the island of Vithey. Before leaving Copenhagen, and on my return there, I formed a most agreeable acquaintance with Mr. Gisli Brinjulfsson, quite a young man, but already enjoying a good literary reputation, both in his own country and in Denmark. He is a graduate of the Iceland College, and edited for two successive years the "NORTHURFARI,"—an Iceland "Annual." This volume gives a *résumé* of the political news of the world for the year previous, together with tales, original poetry, and many interesting translations from English and American writers. But the time of my departure from the country arrives, and these jottings must close. As the vessel prepared to sail, several of my Iceland friends came to see me

off, and wish me a pleasant journey. As I took their parting hands, I could not but think that this, in all human probability, was our last meeting on earth. Promises to write and send newspapers were mutually interchanged. The booming gun echoes o'er the broad waters—the sail is set—the mountains fast disappearing in the distance, and the shores of Iceland grow dim on my sight. The little ship with the wandering pilgrim goes dancing over the waves.

"The land is no longer in view,
The clouds have begun to frown;
But, with a stout vessel and crew,
We'll say, let the storm come down.

"And the song of our hearts shall be,
While the winds and waters rave,—
A home, a home, on the firm-set lea!
And *not* on the bounding wave!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

> And we sail'd, and we flew, and went near the Maëlstrom bay,
> And we danced, and we frolick'd, and we fiddled all the way.
>
> OLD SONG.

A FINE morning in August found our little schooner dancing over the waves of the Greenland strait. Towering up on our right was the lofty Snæfell Jokull, one of the highest mountains in Iceland. It has the regular conical shape of most volcanoes. It is six thousand feet high, being one-third higher than Vesuvius. At this season about two-thirds of its height is black, and the rest is covered with perpetual snow. When more than fifty miles to the south, I took a drawing of it. It is near the end of a long peninsula, south of Breithifiorth, and very nearly the westernmost point of Iceland. The sharp outline of the mountain is distinctly visible in the clear atmosphere here for more than a hundred miles. This volcano has not had an eruption for several centuries. Two or three parties of modern travellers have been to the summit. They have described the ascent, after reaching the snow-line, as extremely dangerous. Wide and deep cracks in the everlasting ice, and treacherous bridges of snow, made the danger so great that they tied themselves in a string, to a long rope, and walked about six feet apart. Then, if one man fell through into a chasm, the rest pulled him out. No lives were lost, however, in these excursions; the toil sweetened the pleasure, the danger spiced it, and they were much gratified with their lofty journey. To the east of Snæfell Jokull, we sailed by Stapi, a small town near some famous basaltic cliffs on the coast. Immense perpendicular columns, and many thrown

down, give the coast much the appearance of the vicinity of the Giant's Causeway and the island of Staffa. The coast here is more varied, and the scenery more magnificent, than the north of Ireland; but there is no cave yet discovered that will vie with the famed one of Fingal's. Some of the pillars here at Stapi are near eight feet in diameter, and all of them of the regular geometrical shape so often seen in basaltic rocks. They are like the cells in honeycombs, but solid, and generally hexagonal, but sometimes heptagons and pentagons. Though the time when these basalts were in a state of fusion is very remote, yet there is no doubt of their volcanic character. If geologists and mineralogists wish to see volcanic matter in every variety of form, let them come to Iceland.

We passed by the Meal Sack and the Grenadier Islands the first day, and rounded the long nose of Cape Reykjanes, and the second found us driving before a south-west wind, due east, along the south coast of Iceland. We sailed near the Westmann Islands, and plainly in sight of the lofty summits of Hekla, Torfa, Eyjafjalla, and Tindfjalla Jokulls. The most singular curiosity on the south coast of Iceland that can be seen from the sea, is a group of rocks that I should call *The Needles*, from their great resemblance to the "Needles" off the Isle of Wight. They are near a little fishing village called Dyarholar, or "Portland." The rocks are shaped a little more like bodkins than needles, and some of them rear their pointed heads near a hundred feet high. They all stand in the ocean, some of them above a mile from land. As we sailed east, the craggy summit of the Oræfa Jokull showed his lofty and chilly head. The sides, too, were visible as well as the summit, and perpendicular rocks and dark-looking caverns showed the footprints of mighty convulsions of nature. The Oræfa Jokull, forming part of that immense mountain known as Skaptar Jokull, is, as I have mentioned before, the highest in Iceland. By trigonometrical measurement it is 6760 feet high. Snæfell Jokull is 6000 feet; Eyjafjalla

Jokull, 5900; and Hekla, 5700. The Thiorsá river, a stream larger than the Hudson or the Rhine, rises high up on the side of Skaptar Jokull, 3000 feet above the level of the sea, and in a deep cañon in the lava, pours its resistless torrent down into the ocean. Its rapid and turbulent current may be imagined. These mountains in the interior of the country, the volcanic islands out at sea, the rapid and powerful rivers, the Geysers, and innumerable hot springs, along with the magnificent coast scenery, form the most prominent physical features of Iceland.

For two days we were skirting the island on the south coast. This and the eastern part of Iceland has few harbours. The coast is much of it low and sandy, and difficult of approach. Some years since, a French vessel was wrecked here in the winter season, and the crew cast ashore perfectly destitute. A few poor Icelanders that lived in the vicinity, carried them to their huts, fed, and took care of them, and gave them shelter till spring. The next summer, on the annual return of the French war vessel that visits Iceland, the sailors were taken home; and King Louis Philippe ordered a handsome compensation and reward in money, to the Icelanders who had so hospitably protected his shipwrecked sailors. They, however, did not wish it, said they had only done their duty, and neither wanted nor deserved compensation; and steadily refused to accept a single penny. Determined to do something in return for their kindness, Louis Philippe ordered his representative in Iceland to state that he would educate at the University of France four young Icelanders; and the Governor, the Bishop, and the President of the College made choice of the young men who were to be recipients of the favour. At the end of their term—four years—as many more were selected; and thus the French government undertook the constant care and expense of the education of four Iceland boys, who were appointed for their ability, diligence, and good conduct, to receive the bounty of the French government; and all for an act of humanity towards

a crew of shipwrecked sailors. The whole transaction reflects the highest honour on all concerned. One of the young gentlemen who was a recipient of this privilege, was a son of my friend, Mr. Sivertsen. After the French war-vessel, the unfortunate LILLOISE, was lost, or failed to return from the Arctic sea, in connection with one of the expeditions that went in search of her, there was a scientific corps—a "Scandinavian Commission" —organized, of learned men from France, Denmark, and Iceland, to gather information, make drawings of landscapes, and collect specimens of mineralogy, botany, and the various branches of natural history. The commission was headed by M. Paul Geimar, and our young Icelander was one of the party. The results of the expedition, in a scientific point of view, were of the highest value. A work was published, containing several folio volumes of plates, many of them coloured, and the Journal of the Expedition, in six octavos; and altogether it forms the most valuable work of the kind extant. It comprises Iceland, Greenland, Lapland, and Spitzbergen; and nothing, either of a geographical, scientific, or historical nature has been omitted. Along with portraits of Geimar and others of the Commission, is a "counterfeit presentment" of young Sivertsen; and his is one of the finest faces ever delineated. It has the lively, intelligent countenance, lofty brow, and beaming eye of the Anglo-Saxons, and equal to the finest specimens of the Caucasian race in any part of the world. This promising young man died in France, a few years after his return from the North, universally esteemed by all, and by none more than by Louis Philippe himself.

But the winds are drifting us lazily to the eastward. We sailed north of Faroe, and saw the cliffs of the lofty Stromoe towering upwards like the ruins of some gigantic temple. The return voyage was all beautiful September weather. Our passengers—except the bachelor of the present writing—consisted of twelve young Iceland ladies, and a small lad; and we had a regu-

lar "jolly" time. Several of the young ladies were singers, and two of them had guitars. Nearly every afternoon we had a dance. The young ladies made fast progress in English—and Yankee—manners, customs, language, *and* dancing. I also got well posted up in Icelandic, particularly in the sentimental,—or, as Sam Weller would say, in the more "tenderer vords." Guitar music, Iceland hymns, the violin, and "threading the dance" on a rocking deck, were all matters of every-day occurrence. Did I say every day? Not with me. But the master of the Sölöven, Captain ——, was certainly the most reckless, irreligious man for a sea-captain that ever I saw in my life. Had a sober traveller come alongside of us on Sunday, he would have been bothered to have found out what kind of worship we had aboard. His reflections would probably have been like old Lambro's, when he returned, from his piratical cruise, to his island and his daughter. Suppose such a one in his yacht had come up with us:

"A Christian he, and as our ship he nears,
He looks aboard, and finds no signs of idling,
He hears—alas! no music of the spheres,
But an unhallow'd, earthly sound of fiddling!
A melody which makes him doubt his ears,
The cause being past his guessing or unriddling:
But, lo! it is the sailors all a prancing,
The women, too, and Captain —— dancing!"

It does not speak well for the Danish people and nation, that their mail-ship, the only government vessel running between Denmark and Iceland, is commanded by a man of the character of Captain ——; and I cannot think it will long continue so. To place in command of a vessel carrying the government dispatches, and having the most popular and direct passenger traffic between the two countries, a profligate who openly boasts of debauching his female passengers, defenceless women, the sisters and daughters of the citizens of both countries, certainly does not reflect any honour on the proprietors of the vessel.

On, on, goes our little bark; the northern shore

> "Fades o'er the waters blue;
> The night winds sigh, the breakers roar,
> And shrieks the wild seamew."

Old Norway's coast appears, and we are several days in sight of the brown and snowy mountains, and little villages of wooden houses. The thirteenth day we passed Cape Lindesness, and Christiansand. We were then within two hundred and fifty miles of Copenhagen—only a few hours' voyage for a steam-ship; but we had no steam aboard, except what might be found in certain kettles and casks, and these did not aid our progress much. I thought two days at farthest would suffice for the rest of our voyage; but Boreas was not in the ascendant, nor any of his brethren either, for we had very little wind from any quarter. The current in the Skager Rack took us outwardly about two miles an hour, and the wind was south-easterly, and we were bound in. One tack would throw us near the coast of Norway, and the next brought us along the low, flat sands of Jutland. We advanced from twenty-five to fifty miles a day. Several huge steamers boomed past us, with their black sides, and volumes of smoke, and swift progress. Some of them were bound into the Baltic, and some out, and some to Norwegian ports. At last we rounded the Skagen Horn, and entered the Cattegat. Finally, the towers of Elsinore Castle appeared; and, a breeze springing up from the north, we dropped anchor before Copenhagen, the twentieth day after leaving Iceland; and in a most terrible rain—so anxious were we to tread the land again—all the passengers were set on the quay, and found lodgings amid the turmoil of a great city.

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